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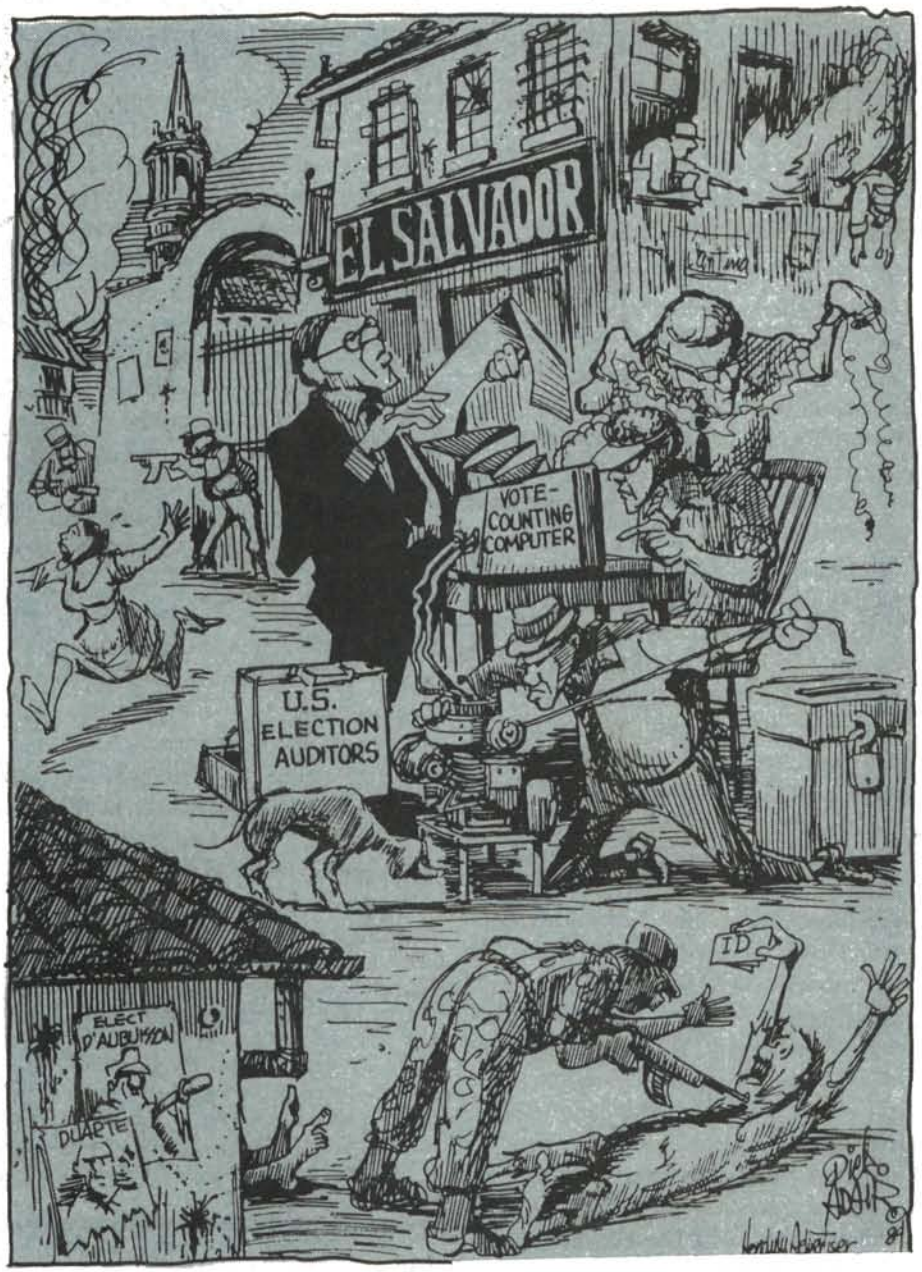


# CENTRAL AMERICA

JIM CHAPIN
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THE EDITORS

# THE GOD BEYOND

DANIEL J. O'HANLON

**WARSAW EASTER**
THOMAS R. SWICK

**NEW WORLD ORDER II**
FRED SIEGEL

**MAMET & MILLER**
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**GREEN'S GANDHI**
PATRICK JORDAN

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# Correspondence

## Friendly government

Chicago, Ill.

*To the Editors:* Your Feb. 10 issue arrived yesterday. The two pieces on Guatemala witnessing to the terrible sufferings of the poor and the U.S. collusion in their plight provoked this reflection.

"God bless you," mouths our president as he closes yet another televised disinformation-on-Central-America report to me and millions of other Americans. Each time he says it a chill creeps down my back. As a Christian who knows the truth about the four million Mayan Indians in Guatemala, among whom I lived and worked for several years, I am outraged. He must be asking his gods of nuclear destruction and unlimited profit for U.S. business to bless us. He can't mean our God of Life!

Guatemalan Indians are pursued, strafed and napalmed by U.S. helicopters — the civilian Bell variety fitted with machine guns. The heavy military transport trucks carrying soldiers to their grisly task of raping, torturing, and massacring Indians are U.S.-made — a gift of President Reagan in 1981. He called them "economic aid."

Mr. Reagan tells us about "friendly governments." These, in the case of Guatemala, seem to be a succession of military monsters who have cruelly ruled since the first one was placed there by CIA intervention in 1954. One of these "friendly" government types, General Efrain Rios-Montt, during his 1982-83 regime had a similar arrangement for disinforming his upper- and middle-class Guatemalan public. On national TV, he told them that he was protecting them from Communism. They nodded and thought, "That's right." They'd never lived like the Indian, from the unproductive slopes of the mountains, earned $1 a day for sun-up-to-sundown-back-breaking labor on the plantations of the powerful, washed in the river, hunted for firewood, walked five hours to Sunday market, wished their children could learn to read but there was no chance, needed medicine when there was none. The comfortable thought that these fighting up in the mountains must be Communist. After all, they were asking for land. And private property is more sacred than life. If the president says it's Communist, it must be so. Rios-Montt couldn't see, either, that for some Christians, to talk of God is to talk of His/Her life in human people. You can't desecrate it, starve it, bomb it, torture it, rape it without touching its Creator and Sustainer, can you?

But then, he alway smiled and talked about prayer and he always ended with "God bless you."

SARA COUGHLIN

## Democratic dilemma

Missoula, Mt.

*To the Editors:* Recently handed a copy of *Commonweal* [Nov. 18, 1983] in which Senator Carlin set forth the dilemma of anti-abortionists in supporting the Democratic party. As a Democrat and physician, I have taken my knocks. My sympathy is with the senator. Would that the issue would fade away. It keeps returning with each campaign — like rattlesnakes in summer.

His comments are perceptive and accurate, with one exception. The belief that human life is not present from the "moment of conception" is unsound, and leads to much difficulty — both theological and political.

Each being must have soul compatible with its nature. Souls do not evolve or progress. Transmigration of souls may provide an explanation, but it is doubtful even Democrats on the East Coast would long defend this bizarre philosophy. Surely here in Montana, there is no interest in such notions. With the temperature at 40° below, the cattle dying, the snow piling up for spring floods, and wildlife moving timidly into town, it might be hard to persuade a pregnant wife that she is probably pregnant. Wait a little longer and the fetus will become human — maybe.

The bishops' recent approach to tie the nukes, capital punishment, and abortion all in one package has promise.

SENTOR BILL NORMAN
Montana State Senate

## The pro-life people

Portsmouth, R.I.

*To the Editors:* I am a pro-life Democrat from Rhode Island, and like Senator David Carlin ["The Dilemma of an Anti-abortion Democrat," Nov. 18, 1983], I am deeply disturbed with the politics of the Democratic party. What is particularly deplorable now is the candidates for the Oval Office who are deliberately playing one group in our country against another in a crass attempt to garner a few votes. It is impossible to identify with that leadership, and the rank opportunism their actions suggest.

On the other hand, I feel obliged to take issue with the senator, because in my fifteen years of involvement with the Rhode Island pro-life community, I have never seen Senator Carlin at any pro-life gathering. I have to wonder which "right-wing anti-abortionists" he is talking about "whose hostility to abortion . . . . is often motivated by something less amiable than the love of life they've written across their banners." Quite an indictment from a man who is a virtual stranger to Rhode Island's pro-life movement.

This reaction was prompted by my personal association with the courageous people who make up the pro-life movement in this state — an association that goes back many years and which has survived innumerable struggles, as we have worked to influence the public pol-

*(Continued on page 286)*

*Commonweal* is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mi. 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Micro-Photo Division, Old Mansfield Road, Wooster Ohio 44691. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. Copyright © 1984 Commonweal Foundation.

*Illustrations:* Cover, Dick Adair, *Honolulu Advertiser*; pp. 261, 262, 265, 276, Bas., *Tachydromos*, Greece; p. 268, Kemchs, Mexico; p. 272, St. John's, Collegeville; p. 273, Graston, *Windsor Star*, Ontario.



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*Commonweal*, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly, except monthly Christmas-New Year's and July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 232 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. Telephone: (212) MU 3-2042. Single copy, $1.25. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $24; Canada, $26; foreign, $29. Special two-year rate: U.S., $43; Canada, $47; foreign, $53. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 232 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.



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# CENTRAL AMERICA: THE WAY OUT

REMEMBER THE KISSINGER commission report? Issued on January 10, the Report of the President's National Bipartisan Commission on Central America was supposed to provide what its name implied: the basis for a national consensus on a comprehensive U.S. policy toward the region. Four months later, the report is a dead letter, there is no national consensus, and there may not even be a U.S. policy, at least not a comprehensive one, toward Central America.

About the last point, it is hard to be certain. Visibility is almost zero when it comes to charting the direction of administration policy. Washington is fogged in with denials, equivocation, and outright deception. The affair of the mines is only part of a much larger problem. Direct U.S. military involvement in the region has been growing by leaps and bounds. We are now financing, arming, and to some considerable extent directly commanding anti-Sandinista Nicaraguan forces 15,000 strong, bigger by one-fourth, in other words, than the Salvadoran guerrillas (and even more significant when one recalls that the population of Nicaragua is only half that of El Salvador). There are at least ten times as many U.S. military advisors in the area as there were a year ago. American pilots are daily (and nightly) flying reconnaissance missions and radioing information in support of Salvadoran military actions. Airfields, training bases, radar stations, and deposits of military supplies have been built up in Honduras, and a naval base proposed — with the Pentagon insisting, all the while, that we are not establishing any permanent presence. Exercises involving 350 ships and tens of thousands of U.S. troops are now underway. In a month, a thousand airborne troops will practice parachuting into areas bordering Nicaragua and El Salvador. Contingency plans are reported to be in preparation for American invasions of Nicaragua or guerrilla-controlled areas in El Salvador, complete with diplomatic justification. Not that the diplomats at the State Department appear to be in charge; Central American policy is increasingly the domain of the Pentagon and the CIA.

Congress is pretty well aware of all this, but it would prefer not to look too hard. Only when the administration positively rubs Congress's face in something like the mining incident has there been a definite reaction. Even then, the two Houses have chosen more to drag their feet than reach any clean decision. The reason, of course, is that they have no consensus on a comprehensive approach to the problem — exactly what the Kissinger commission report was supposed to provide.

So what was wrong with the report? Obviously, for many commentators it was tainted from the start by the well-earned reputation for deviousness of the commission's chairman. In addition, the report is flawed, on the one hand, by its rather sanitized presentation of American involvement in the region and of governments like those of El Salvador and Guatemala as fledgling democracies, and, on the other hand, by its description of regional insurgencies as having no existence independent




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## Going on 60

**From Commonweal thirty years ago:** "This nation has been catapulted into a position of world leadership. . . . Because this is so, it is important to stop every now and then to realize what our strength is . . . the truly revolutionary idea of freedom. . . . Freedom is, so to speak, our stock in trade. . . . Now, in 1954, the cold war with the Soviet has been under way for the better part of a decade. . . . In this war internal security is essential, but it is clear that it is only one part of the overall struggle. We need to devote a larger part of our energies to positive measures which will encourage understanding and strengthen our ties with our allies. . . . We need to re-affirm and enlarge our plans to help create in impoverished areas a political and economic climate which will be unfavorable to the spread of Communism. And we need to build a truly bi-partisan foreign policy, with prior consultation and joint responsibility, free of partisan name-calling. It is to such tasks that the largest portion of our energies should be devoted." **—The Editors, "The Weapon of Freedom" May 7, 1954**

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of Cuban and Soviet actions. Nonetheless, the report paints a devastating picture of bankruptcy — the economic bankruptcy of the region but even more important the social and political bankruptcy of the ruling elites and of past U.S. policy. As one of the report's defenders acutely observed in the March *Commentary*, the commission has produced what would once have been a mainsteam Democratic document. The report is dedicated to the late Senator Henry Jackson and it reflects the (Henry) Jacksonian persuasion, rooted in post-war containment policy, that massive economic development, launched behind an effective "military shield," will produce democracy. According to this author, the report's proposal for a five-year plan costing $8 billion in economic aid "adds up to what could be described as a Central American version of the Mississippi Freedom Summer. Thousands of U.S. teachers, agrarian advisers, management counselors, legal-services aides, health-care and even family-planning workers would be sent into the region, unloosing the Great Society on Central America." It is hard to read that passage without irony, coming as it does in a journal which regularly bemoans the unloosing of the Great Society on the U.S. But the author, in familiar neoconservative fashion, ascribes liberal opposition to this wonderful vision only to the supposed fact that liberals have abandoned democracy.

On the contrary, if the Kissinger commission report now lies neglected, it is not because liberals have abandoned democracy but because they — and not only they — may have abandoned certain illusions. The first is that a government successfully cutting back on human services for its own citizens will be willing or able to freely provide them for Central Americans. The second, and far more central, is that the commission's declared concern with ending human-rights abuses and repairing social and economic inequities can really be combined with the "military shield." The nature of the societies and the nature of their civil wars present conditions vastly different from those where the original one-two punch of Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan were applied. In Central America, economic development and social justice cannot be achieved *behind* a military shield. The economic, political, and military must all interact, and in such a way as practically to require the self-elimination of the ruling elites. No one can say for certain that it couldn't happen. But a lot of Americans are unwilling to gamble on it — not with $8 billion in aid and incalculable expenditures in lives and suffering.

WASHINGTON IS enamored of three kinds of solution to its problem in Central America: economic development, elections, and military force. Economic development has, in fact, been tried. From World War II to the early seventies, Central America actually enjoyed remarkable economic growth. It did not break the back of the rigid, exploitative social hierarchies; it did not give birth to a democratic and stable social order.

Elections are the current preoccupation. Are skeptics about the administration's emphasis on elections in Central America saying — as the article cited above charges — that you can have democracy without elections? No, they are saying you can have elections without democracy — as the history of Central America amply illustrates. The likelihood of elections in Sandinista Nicaragua in the near future may concentrate some minds on this matter. Democracy is more than a one-shot procedure of voting. It is the certainty of the *next* election; it is a continuing political life in the between-times; it is the legitimacy of loyal opposition; it is, in other words, a democratic culture.

No one would maintain that, outside of Costa Rica, democratic culture is deeply implanted in Central America. Nonetheless there are many Central Americans with profound democratic aspirations. Some of them are receiving American weapons, but others are receiving American bullets. There are a hundred ways the U.S. could encourage democracy in Central America, most of which we are not doing. One thing we almost certainly cannot do is make it grow out of the barrel of a gun.

What can the U.S. make grow out of the barrel of its guns? Defeat for the Salvadoran guerrillas, probably. Overthrowing the Nicaraguan government, possibly. But only at tremendous cost. The Kissinger commission warns, "The worst possible policy for El Salvador is to provide just enough aid to keep the war going, but too little to wage it successfully." The commission proposes significantly increased levels of military aid but shies away from naming a figure. It does refer to a Defense Department estimate of $400 million for this year and the next with lesser sums for an indefinite period afterwards. Another estimate, including additional military and economic support in the region, puts the costs of a "military solution without U.S. combat troops" at $6.6 billion over five years. There is no counting the amount of Salvadoran suffering which that



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would involve, the political polarization in the U.S., the degradation of democratic ideals, or the possibility that with extensive U.S. equipment and advisers on the ground, this nation would be led directly into the conflict. The same source estimates that a direct U.S. invasion of Nicaragua raises the cost to $16 billion and five thousand American lives. That would occur, to be sure, after the election. No doubt, we would be told how many Americans die yearly in traffic accidents anyway. No one has estimated the cost of Central American bloodshed. Or the cost to the United States's long-term standing in Latin America and Europe, or to its ability to cope with other issues, from the world economy to the arms race.

THERE IS, in fact, another and reasonable solution to the Central American imbroglio: negotiations. In theory, the Reagan administration is committed to "dialogue and negotiations." Almost no close observers have any confidence that the administration's notion of negotiations amounts to much more than arranging for the Salvadoran insurgents' surrender and the Sandinistas' exit from power. President Reagan has declared the region a "vital interest" in terms which hardly allow the survival of anything but regimes reliably in the American orbit. As Undersecretary of Defense Fred Iklé put it, "We do not seek a military stalemate. We seek victory for the forces of democracy." The U.S. has repeatedly undercut or dismissed efforts at negotiations; the last round of Sandinista gestures was met by heightened American demands.

But negotiations are indeed problematic as long as the U.S. maintains an attitude toward its Central American "sphere" that is the mirror image of the Soviets' attitude toward Eastern Europe. Revolutionary forces won't negotiate as long as they believe it is the long-run policy of this nation to eliminate them. Oligarchies and military elites won't negotiate as long as they believe that the U.S. will inevitably have to back them up. The point was effectively demonstrated when the administration failed to follow through on its complaints about Salvadoran death squads; in the previously supportive *New Republic*, this failure was bluntly termed "appeasement." Negotiations will have a real prospect of success only when the United States decides precisely what is really "vital" in its concerns with Central America and separates that from an endless quest to exercise a veto over what kind of internal regimes emerge in these nations.

Which brings us to the security question. It is in the interest of both America and world peace that no sudden or drastic shifts occur in the superpower balance. Cuba already poses some serious problems of interdiction of American support to NATO in wartime—a matter that ought to be of special concern to those who want to see deterrence—or even, if worst came to worst, war—stabilized at the non-nuclear level. The U.S. has a wide range of possible countermeasures. But the situation would be greatly inflamed by the installation in Central America of Soviet weapons aimed at the U.S. or at the surrounding nations, or by the establishment of a permanent Soviet presence or a naval base servicing Soviet submarines.

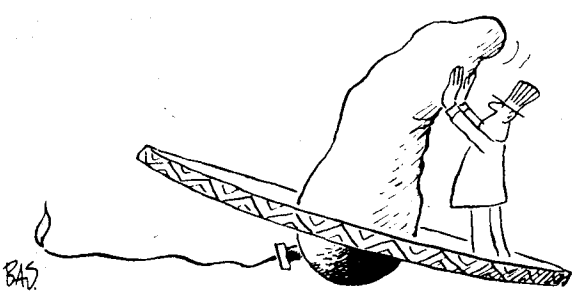
It is to these precise matters that U.S. policy should be directed. It is in this regard that a clearcut American declaration of intent — and readiness to back up that declaration with military action — would be justified. It is in these terms that the U.S. should couch the essentials it wants to negotiate in Central America.

When this journal previously argued that America should combine an uncompromising policy toward concrete Soviet military installations in Central America with a relaxed policy toward the nature of Central American regimes (although not abandoning its leverage, especially economic, for supporting democratic elements), we met with two kinds of responses. From those hostile to the exercise of military power generally, there came the criticism that such a stance left open the door to unilateral military action and self-serving definitions of what constituted a concrete Soviet incursion. True enough. But does the present American position — or any that the U.S. is likely to take this side of world government — rule out such unilateral judgments? The difference is that the grounds of U.S. intervention are concretely specified and narrowed.

From the other side came the criticism that such a posture was based on the premise that the U.S. could "safely wait" to see if the Soviet Union would take advantage of a friendly regime in the regime and that it was therefore "complacent about the latent threat posed to U.S. interests there." According to James Finn and R. Bruce McColm, writing in last fall's *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, "The time to secure those interests is now. The question . . . is how. . . ." But there is no reason why targeting U.S. policy precisely on excluding Soviet installations is a matter of waiting or complacency. The authors simply refuse to explore the possibility of achieving that through negotiations, formal "line-drawing," and unilateral military readiness. They proceed blithely down the road of assuming that, cost what it will, governments even latently friendly to the Soviet Union must be barred from power in Central America — presumably for as long as the superpower rivalry persists.

Traveling down that road means handing blank checks to local oligarchs and death squads; it means a prolonged bleeding of Nicaragua; or it means full-scale American intervention. Of course there would be risks in the alternative approach, seeking negotiations on the basis of a carefully circumscribed definition of U.S. "vital interests." Yet they would be far less than the ones we are now running.

Only someone who believes Poland is a great victory for the Soviet Union should think that our current policy in Central America is leading to a triumph for the U.S.



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## Report from the Philippines

# THE MISSING MODERATES

### IT'S MARCOS VS. THE HARD LEFT

OF ALL THE Asian countries the Philippines should be the easiest for a Western reader to understand. It is Catholic and highly Americanized, at least superficially. It is also very similar politically and economically to the Latin American countries that are now in the headlines.

These days it is even easier to understand, for more and more only two strong personalities separate themselves from the indecision and compromise that mark the country's political life — President Ferdinand Marcos and the NPA rifleman. Marcos has been the uncontested strong man of the country since 1965. The NPA, or New People's Army, is the armed wing of the Communist party of the Philippines.

Ironically both Marcos and the NPA soldier are as un-Filipino as it is possible to be. They are singleminded, ruthless, unsentimental, patient, tireless, and filled with a sense of their own importance. Most anthropologists would say Filipinos are just the opposite.

Yet the two seem to be the only long-range alaternatives available for the country, especially since the recent collapse of the united moderate opposition in its first real test, over whether or not to participate in May's parliamentary elections. One sizable group, with apparent U.S. blessing, is contesting the election. Another has mounted a boycott. The Catholic bishops are also split, though not as publicly. In November the bishops' administrative council took a neutral position on the elections, but recently Cardinal Jaime Sin has urged people to participate.

Seven months ago President Marcos was a sick man at the head of a government reeling from the Aquino assassination and the economic crisis that followed. He was ridiculed by politicians and businessmen who for ten years had been quiet as altar boys. His own ministers were silent in his defense, and President Reagan called off a state visit. Now Marcos is back, apparently as strong as ever, *redivivus* as only a dictator can be (Think of the stories of Stalin on his deathbed opening his eyes while his henchmen toasted his departure.) Marcos is accepted again at the heart of the country's political life by the U.S. government, the business community, and many bishops, including Cardinal Sin. Former Senator Jose Diokno once said with grudging admiration: "Filipinos? We're fifty million sheep and one S.O.B."

The NPA has suffered hundreds of casualties in its long armed struggle in the mountains and backwaters of the country, but it has now about 8,000-10,000 armed men and women and, spokesmen say, three people trained to use every additional gun they get. It has a near monopoly on young, dedicated Filipinos.

Most Filipinos, given a choice, would choose neither Marcos nor the NPA, but the moderate alternatives that culturally would seem more attuned to the prevailing outlook lack the fierce determination and the international support needed to come to power. The wider tragedy is that third-world choices have inexorably been narrowed down by circumstances to strong man or guerrilla.

THIS MAY SOUND like activist rhetoric and I would not have written so a few years ago. However, it seems to be true: the United States and the young Filipino radicals started years ago oversimplifying the situation into black-and-white terms, and by their actions they have succeeded in fact in creating the world they imagined.

Over the last seven months, the United States, through its influence on the World Bank and other foreign funding bodies, had the power to dictate to the Philippines the conditions it wanted, up to and including Marcos's resignation, in return for a resumption of international funding and a rescheduling of the country's debt. The U.S. has settled instead for an election contested by a sector of the opposition, to elect a parliament that is powerless.

The United States could have forced Marcos and his immediate followers to resign — the same role it played in the end with the Shah and Somoza — and arranged a free election to choose successors. It could have brought the Philippine army, shorn of its top Marcos men, to back such an arrangement. At this time in Filipino history, moderate democratic leaders more or less nationalist, more or less friendly to the United States, but all rational and open to compromise with U.S. interests here (the military bases especially), would have been elected. This would have undercut the radical left or channeled its forces into a more democratic process, and, even if the new government could not have worked miracles to solve the country's problems, it would have had popular support and breathing room for some years to try in a democratic way. Why the United States chose not to do this remains a mystery to me and to most Filipinos. Once the Americans made their choice,

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Filipino businessmen followed. They are after all supreme realists.

The bishops' contradictory statements on the coming elections are signs of the basic weaknesses of their conference. They have no professional staff to prepare position papers for the meetings or to follow up on decisions made, no secretariat that can deal with day-to-day problems. Further there are deep personal and political differences among them. So they meet twice a year but there is no consolidation of points of view, continuity, or thrust. They are simply amateurs abroad in this modern society, easily rounded up as allies by the most respectable group, the businessmen. There are exceptions, but those have never thought of organizing to influence the larger body of bishops and presenting a common and consistent position based on the Gospel and the church's social teaching.

It is left, then, to the poor people to work for basic reforms in the country, with whatever allies they can gather. If the poor were organized into effective democratic labor unions and peasant organizations, some moderate solution might still be possible. But they are not so organized. The Marcos government with U.S. acquiescence has systematically worked for years to suppress such groups. The radical left also discouraged their growth, because rightly or wrongly it has seen them as threats to its own organizational efforts. The harm done by the Communist party in this way has probably been greater than the Marcos government's; the party has controlled the supply of dedicated social action workers who are the lifeblood of people's groups, especially in the early stages.

WHAT THEN do the millions of poor and lower-middle-class Filipinos do? They do the best they can within the narrow limits laid down for them by the U.S. Embassy and the Filipino elite, on the one hand, and the Communist party, on the other. The scenario that was only imagined by these two antagonists some years ago is now reality. I saw some hints of what the future may hold at a recent rally supporting the election boycott in Manila's Luneta Park.

Some 150,000-200,000 people gathered to meet groups of boycott marchers from North and South Luzon. Most of the marchers were farmers, sunburned and exhausted after their journeys. The rich were mostly gone. Leftist underground groups were more prominent in the rally's organization than they had been in the past.

The underground showed much more sophistication than ever before in allowing member groups of the organizing coalition, most of whom are far from leftist, equal time at the microphone and equal space for their banners. A member of the Mangyan tribe of Mindoro Island was given a chance to speak, for example. A labor leader spoke though he had recently edged out the left's own candidate for control of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (May 1 Movement), the most radical of labor federations. Several "traditional old politicians," as they are called here (almost as if they were a type of tribal group themselves with their own strange ways and customs) also spoke, including Diosdado Macapagal, former president of the country, although they, too, are far from being leftists.

There were no church groups among the coalition members and very few sisters or priests at the rally. Most people were ordinary men and women whom no one organized. Perhaps one young girl spoke for them when she told me she came because she wants freedom and democracy.

We sat under a thin new moon listening to the speakers, though what is said at these rallies matters very little — most often in fact the public address system hardly works at all. This crowd around me, I thought, is probably the basic opposition force of the future. It will be made up mostly of the poor with some sympathizers from the upper classes and the church, and it will depend for its organization and élan on the leftists. Ultimately it will follow the road down which the leftists point, though the huge crowd in the moonlight was gentle and showed absolutely no desire for violent solutions.

The success of this opposition will depend on the wisdom of the left. Till now leftist leaders have failed to build a real united front or popular organizations. This they must do because people are still far from ready for overt Communist direction. Perhaps the leadership will become less dogmatic and more patient. If they are, they will have their way in the end.

Such an outcome is not what most Filipinos would choose now if they had other real alternatives at hand. Unfortunately, the alternatives have one by one been removed by the right and left, like chess players moving quickly through the opening moves of a match to get to the essential struggle — as they perceive it.

This seems to be the situation in the Philippines today although here the unexpected is the norm and anything may happen at any time.

DENIS MURPHY

*(Denis Murphy is the Assistant Executive Secretary of the Office for Human Development of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference. He has lived in the Philippines for twenty-four years.)*

# Foreign policy alternatives

## NEW WORLD ORDER II

### BUT WHAT ABOUT THE RUSSIANS?

THE JOURNAL *Foreign Affairs* was, until the late 1960s, virtually synonymous with postwar American foreign policy. George Kennan used the pages of *Foreign Affairs* to lay out the doctrine of containment which became the guiding creed of the nation's foreign policy establishment. When containment was discredited by Vietnam, liberal critics of the war found an outlet for their ideas in a new magazine, *Foreign Policy*, launched in 1970 and now published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. *Foreign Policy* devoted itself to the "lessons of Vietnam." It published some of the increasingly dovish members of the old foreign policy



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elite like Paul Warnke and Townsend Hoopes, and it carried articles by established critics like Richard Barnet and Stanley Hoffmann; but it also featured newer "Vietnam generation" analysts like Leslie Gelb, Richard Moose, and Anthony Lake, all of whom were to end up in or near the Carter administration.

In the angry, overheated days of the early 1970s when the Cambodia invasion and Kent State clash threatened what Spiro Agnew called "positive polarization," the *Foreign Policy* writers, many of whom hoped for a post in future Democratic administrations, struck a moderately liberal tone. In the manner of the Wall Streeters and businessmen grown increasingly critical of the war, their muted discussions eschewed expressions of moral outrage let alone frontal assaults on American imperialism. Dedicated to creating new alternatives to both standard containment doctrine and Kissinger's amoral realpolitik, they proposed to develop a new "world order" creed for American foreign policy. They urged policy makers to "get on the right side of history" and accept the inevitability and at times even the desirability of revolutions in the developing world. Vietnam had shown that force was often irrelevant, and the superpowers could no longer impose themselves on the former colonial world. Military intervention there was not only counter-productive for the U.S. but unnecessary since third-world nationalism was likely to keep Soviet power in check. In an increasingly complex world where our NATO allies were also our trading rivals, bipolarity no longer made any sense. Instead of defining the world in terms of the Russian-American face-off, these analysts, writing in the tradition of Cobden and Bright's nineteenth-century free-trade radicalism, urged the U.S. to turn to economic competition in its struggle with the Soviets. If we focused on trade and economic development, they argued, we could solve the real problems of the world which were not East-West but North-South. To put this vision in place, Thomas Hughes, president of the Carnegie Endowment proposed a new "liberal-populist governing" alliance which would look "inward to redistributing the affluence of an inequitable America" and "outward to a constructive new American accommodation with mankind."

Jimmy Carter became the vehicle for this new alliance. Tutored in a "world order" perspective by Trilaterialist Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Georgia governor who had once been a staunch supporter of Lieutenant Calley absorbed the ideas of the new creed. Differentiating himself from Kissinger, candidate Carter told the *New York Times,* "We must replace balance-of-power politics with world-order politics. . . . Issues of war and peace will be more a function of economic and social problems than of military security problems which have dominated international relations . . . since WWII." President Carter set the tone of his foreign policy with his now famous May 1977 Notre Dame speech where he called upon the country to put aside the "inordinate fear of Communism" which had led us to embrace rapacious right-wing dictators. Speaking of our "intellectual and moral poverty" and our "failure" in Vietnam, he insisted we had to rise above "narrow national interest" to solve the global problems of "nuclear war, racial hatred, the arms race, environmental damage, hunger, and disease."

It was a message long overdue and Carter scored some notable successes. He won approval of the Panama Canal Treaty; he helped negotiate the largely peaceful Rhodesian settlement; his human rights policy aided untold numbers of Latin American political prisoners and lent hope and legitimacy to anti-authoritarian forces, and of course there was Camp David. But some apparent strengths of the administration, its emphasis on human rights and North-South as opposed to East-West relations, created problems for Soviet-American relations. The Soviets were dismayed by the "reckless idealism" of Carter's human-rights policy, and their violations of the 1975 Helsinki Accords on human rights undercut American public support for détente. Similarly the North-South emphasis was taken as a rebuff, a denial of the Soviets' hard-earned status as the co-equal superpower.

After some rough sledding with Moscow on the SALT II negotiations, everything went off track. Plans for a new relationship with the third world were derailed by fears that the Soviets would take advantage of the Iranian revolution. Carter now observed that the U.S. had to "take the world as it is" and maintain her military strength. Then, in the wake of the Iranian hostage crisis and alarmed by reports of a Soviet build-up on the Afghan border, Carter issued five separate warnings to the Soviets. Carter, as Richard Barnet explains it "could not believe" that the Soviets would attempt "so blatant a challenge to the status quo." When the Soviets invaded, the president felt betrayed and over-reacted. His push for a U.S. weapons buildup paved the way for the unabashed militarism of Ronald Reagan. Now after three years of a re-militarized foreign policy, Seyom Brown, writing in a new magazine, *World Policy,* tells us, "Many who were in the vanguard of the alternative worldview in the early and mid-seventies may be ready once again to champion that alternative with greater conviction."

*WORLD POLICY,* whose first issue appeared in the fall of 1983 hopes to play the same catalytic role in a new (and for them preferably a Gary Hart) Democratic administration that *Foreign Policy* played in the early Carter years. The journal is the brainchild of the *World Policy Institute,* a nonprofit educational organization whose roots go back to the post-World War II interest in World Federalism. Located appropriately enough at U.N. Plaza, the Institute shares a building with such like-minded organizations as the Movement for a Better World, the International Affairs Committee of the World Council of Churches, the Esperantic Studies Foundation, The International Peace Academy and the Jane Addams Peace Association. The guiding force behind the magazine and the Institute's outreach efforts is Arch Gillies. Gillies, who worked for Nelson Rockefeller for ten years and then for John Hay Whitney, later went on to help establish Barry Commoner's Citizens Party. The magazine is part of a broad left-liberal outreach program called the Security Project. The project's first report, due out in June, is aimed at influencing



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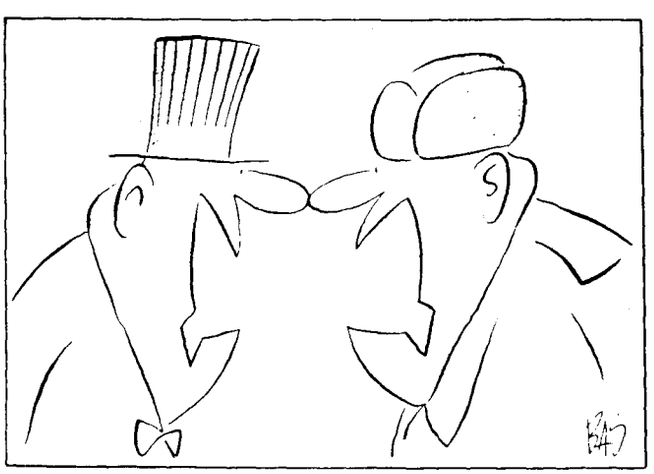
the Democratic Platform Committee and Democrats on the Hill, with a wide range of detailed proposals on disarmament and arms control.

*World Policy*'s editor, Sherle R. Shwenninger, told me that he wanted the journal to become the foreign policy voice for the Vietnam generation of peace, church, and environmental activists who represented America's "progressive internationalist tradition." Like Gary Hart, whom Gillies has referred to favorably, Shwenninger claims that the journal transcends left-right distinctions. While the magazine's "world order" perspective is fundamentally similar to that of *Foreign Policy* in its formative years, there are, Shwenninger told me, some important differences. *World Policy* will be far more concerned with the nuclear issue which has emerged in the past four years; dialogue with the European peace movement will be one of its primary objectives. Shwenninger voiced considerable admiration for the now waning German Greens, and the first issue carried an article by board member Alan Wolfe asking "Why Is There No Green Party in the U.S.?" Fiercely and fundamentally devoted to free trade, the magazine has intelligently focused on another emerging issue, the loss of skilled jobs to overseas competition. This "declining middle problem" is discussed in the second issue by Barry Bluestone (author of *Deindustrializing America*) and Seamus O'Cleiracain.

Finally Shwenninger says that while *Foreign Policy* preached equanimity toward third-world revolutions, *World Policy* will be far more supportive. Cuba, he told me — seemingly unaware of Castro's human rights record and Cuban troops propping up Ethiopia's bloody Mengistu regime — is the country which comes close to fulfilling America's highest ideals. He bristled when I pointed out that indiscriminate support of revolutions carries its own burdens as in the case of Iran, where Richard Falk, a central force behind the journal's creation, had been, for a while, an outspoken apologist for Khomeini.



The prèmiere issue contains an original and tightly argued article by Laurence Radway, a contributor to *Foreign Policy*, on how the U.S. can militarily disengage from Europe. For the most part, however, the journal's critique of Reagan, although compelling, is standard fare. Clearly, we cannot recreate postwar American supremacy. The militarization of Central American diplomacy, the lack of progress in arms control, the continuing support for repressive third-world regimes, all come under scrutiny in the first two numbers. What is disturbing, however, is the journal's failure to come to grips with what went wrong in the Carter administration. When *Foreign Policy* began, it boasted that it had "no institutional memory." *World Policy* doesn't have that luxury.

In the lead article of the first issue, Mary Caldor, a founder of END (European Nuclear Disarmament), lays out an almost purely psychological explanation for the rising tensions of 1978-79. The legitimacy of the Western governments, she argues, is dependent on the threat of the Russians — "the threat of the other," — so that when intra-allied tension over trade threatened to get out of hand, the West had to create a new Russian menace. This simply doesn't make sense. Forget the fact that she mentions the SS-20s only in passing — there had been sharp intra-allied trade differences throughout the seventies. Such intra-allied tensions were at their height when East-West relations were at their best. It was during the détente of the Nixon administration that Treasury Secretary Connally went out of his way to treat the Europeans roughly and the Senate nearly passed a proposal to withdraw American troops from Europe.

The psychological theme is also taken up by *World Policy*'s Managing Editor, Jerry Sanders. His explanation for Carter's failures is simple; Kristol did it. Irving Kristol and his neoconservative friends, that is. Driven by paranoia, their fear of disorder forced them to conjure up threatening Soviet behavior where none existed, or at least none that Sanders can think of.

Presumably Stanley Hoffmann will have to be included among the semi-"sick" since he concludes that the Carter and Reagan hawks would not have prevailed if *World Policy*'s great unmentionable, "Soviet behavior," had not appeared to vindicate the Cold Warriors. It was in 1978, as Thomas Powers points out, that the U.S. learned with certainty that the Soviets were trying to undercut MAD with a substantial civil defense effort. A second blow to East-West amity came when the CIA was forced to revise sharply upward its estimates of Soviet military expenditures made in the early seventies. By 1978 there was little doubt that the Soviets had been engaged in a massive arms buildup all through the period of détente. They seemed to be seeking the sort of advantage Kissinger had described as a thing of the past. A third blow, according to Powers, came in the summer of 1978 when Soviet heavy missile tests in Siberia demonstrated, in the words of one dove, that "it could no longer be denied that the Russians were deliberately building a first-strike war-winning weapon."

The problem, as Jim Carrol understates it in *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened,* his left-liberal history of the seventies, is



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that Carter's conciliatory gestures — the cancellation of the B-1, the hesitation on the neutron bomb, the willingness to bargain away the cruise — "brought few Soviet concessions." The administration was thrown on the defensive by Soviet or Soviet-backed interventions in Ethiopia and Zaire. Considerations of establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba and Vietnam were upset by the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and Cuban adventures in Africa. The Carter administration was left naked before its hawkish critics. As a White House aide put it, "If we spend all our time jawboning against the Soviet Union, we're going to have real problems convincing the American people that the Russians can be trusted." This was before Afghanistan. The post-Afghanistan mood was captured in a Feiffer cartoon. At a time when newscasts were filled with Iranian denunciations of the Great Satan, Feiffer's character says:

"It's Historically False To Libel The Vietnamese Revolution Because Of The Drowning Boat People

"It's Historically False To Libel The Kampuchean Revolution Because Of The Starving Refugees

"It's Historically False To Libel The Iranian Revolution Because Of The Embassy Hostages

"An Objective Historical Analysis Proves That Only One Country Deserves Blame And That's America

"And Do You Know Why?

—"WE'RE INFIDELS!"

Unlike its predecessors *World Policy* does not have the luxury of romantic illusions about third-world revolutions. It has to live with the "other" lessons of Vietnam. If it cannot distinguish between the need to negotiate with Cuba and serving as apologists for Castro, its influence will be short lived. Similarly, if *World Policy* hopes to succeed where the Carterites fell short it will have to do more than wish away Soviet power with pieties about the self-defeating nature of violence. Exaggerated hopes, however benign their source, have been consistently disastrous, from the illusions of 1944-46, to the overselling of détente in the seventies and Carter's rhetoric about how he and Brezhnev had had "similar goals and aspirations." The Soviets, viewing Carter from the backdrop of Vietnam and Watergate, the growing anti-military mood in America and the president's own rhetoric, assumed that Carter had no choice but to silently accept their incursions. We are now paying the price for their miscalculation.

FRED SIEGEL

*(Fred Siegel is the author of* Troubled Journey: From Pearl Harbor to Ronald Reagan, *just published by Hill and Wang.)*

## Of several minds: *John Garvey*

# FAITH & FANATICISM

### HOW TRUTH BECOMES AN EXCUSE FOR MURDER

A COUPLE OF friends, both involved in politics, were sitting in my living room. "Sometimes I wonder whether religion isn't more a cause of evil and division than a cure," one said. "Look at Northern Ireland, the Jews versus the Arabs, Iran . . . . It might be better if there were no religions at all." The other agreed. Without defending religion's often ugly role, I pointed out that political ideology in our century had taken more lives than religion ever had in the history of the human race; maybe the problem wasn't to be located so simply in religion. They knew what I meant, but weren't entirely convinced. I share some of their discomfort.

Some important distinctions have to be made, though. The U.S. news media have generally reported the situation in Northern Ireland, for example, as a case of Catholics versus Protestants; little attention has been given to the complex historical and economic factors, none of them directly related to religion, which have made the Catholic and Protestant communities hostile to one another. To reduce the situation in Northern Ireland to a question of religious intolerance is terribly simplistic. The same thing is true of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The need felt by Jews for a homeland, especially after the attempted extermination of European Jewry and the murder of millions, the injustices done to Palestinians who were expelled to make room for Jewish settlers, the continuing violence — this doesn't reduce to a disagreement between forms of monotheism.

At the same time, religion *is* involved in these disputes. Protestants in Northern Ireland sing "Up with King Billy and down with the Pope." An Armenian woman who had lived in Jerusalem praised Hitler to me once, and hinted that Jews were worthy of death because of their religious obstinacy. A Jewish friend tells me that it will never be possible for Israel to make peace with the Arabs, who are, because of their religion, incapable of moderation, peace, or religious tolerance. The connection of religion with violence is much clearer in the case of Iran. The horror and tragedy of the waves of Iranian children moving suicidally against Iraqi artillery recalls an earlier episode in the history of religious fanaticism, the children's crusade. Christian crusaders were told that "God wills it," and spiritual rewards were offered those who went as crusaders to the Holy Land. The Inquisition tortured and burned people in the name of God's truth. It goes back: Moses's troops slaughtered people in the name of the Lord of Hosts.

Religious people have some easy answers to all this: that was the "spirit of the age," not the essence of the religion. This is true enough, as far as it goes. There are lines in the Torah which contradict the behavior of Israelites in the historic books and the behavior of crusaders and inquisitors is certainly at



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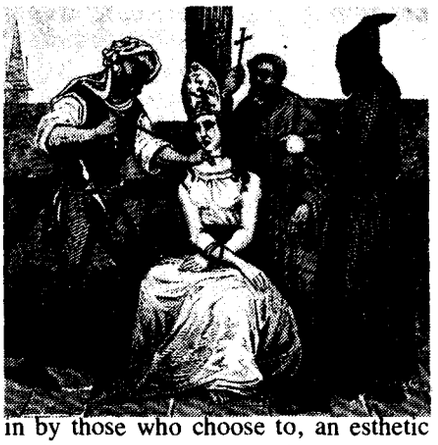
odds with the teaching of Jesus. And it is true that more people have been slaughtered in the name of secular ideologies than were ever murdered in the name of God. But neither of these arguments is taken to its logical conclusion. Shouldn't religious teaching form its hearers in such a way that they will be able to see through or resist the spirit of the age? If it cannot, what is it for? And if it can, why has it not done so in a more impressive way? The argument that more people have died at the hands of secular and atheistic ideologies is only numerically impressive. It rebounds on the believer who makes it: what do religious and secular ideologies which lead people to murder have in common with one another? You have not made an impressive argument in favor of religion when you say that the victims of Joshua's men, Islamic *jihads*, the crusades, and the Inquisition don't equal the numbers of deaths which occurred under Hitler, Stalin, Mao, or the Pol Pot regime.

Another argument is that such figures as Saint Francis of Assisi are what religion is *really* all about; the atrocities are aberrations. But this is like the arguments of those who say that art can only uplift; it can never corrupt. If Shakespeare or Bach inform us in a way which is spiritually important, it is at least theoretically possible that pornography can degrade us; and fascist art — the film *The Triumph of Will*, for example — has been used to move people to evil. Religion in its most exalted form does not strike like lightning. It is found — so far in human history, anyway — in specific religious traditions. Francis of Assisi was Catholic through and through, as St. Seraphim of Sarov was Orthodox, and the Baal Shem Tov a Jew. The communities which formed them were also capable of producing people willing to murder for what the murderers regarded as the same values . . . for the truth of Catholicism, or Orthodoxy, or the Lord of Hosts. No doubt Torquemada was sincerely convinced that it was for the faith of Francis of Assisi that the Inquisition was conducted.

The West since the Enlightenment has consigned religion to the realm of the hobby. It is a taste which can be indulged



in by those who choose to, an esthetic preference. Religion has, by and large, accepted this definition of its role. Where it has not it has run into criticism. The abolitionists, many of those who oppose nuclear arms and abortion, and many of those who want to censor school texts and purge libraries do the sometimes contradictory things they do on the basis of religious conviction. And whether they are (in conventional terms) acting in areas conventionally labeled right wing (as in the case of abortion) or left (as in opposition to nuclear arms) they make a lot of liberal editorialists nervous, and a lot of churchmen as well. Some of the nervousness is no doubt based on memories of religious fanaticism.

But there is a blind spot here. Murder for the sake of a holy cause has passed from religious into secular hands. There are people who regard Hiroshima as an unfortunate necessity, who are bothered at religious objections to nuclear arms. Atheists who look with disdain at the crusades will defend Stalin's purges. Our murderous inclinations haven't changed; the reasons we offer for being willing to kill have.

Western religion has become an ingredient or flavor which is introduced into something which really matters; we bring to our work or to a political enterprise a "Christian spirit" or "Christian perspective." Religion becomes a form of criticism. This sort of religion can only inform; it could never transform. The Christian will feel a Christian poignancy as he drops the bomb on his enemy for the sake of the truth, as defined by the state.

The temptation is to abandon all thought of truths worth living or dying for, since these can so easily be turned into truths worth killing for. But if you believe (as I do) that what St. Francis, St. Seraphim, and the Baal Shem lived for was real, that escape isn't open. The question is, how can we be wholehearted without becoming fanatical? If Christianity is not a perspective, but a radically different way of living, how can it be lived without fanaticism?

Our bloody history shows us that even the most noble-sounding truths can become excuses for murder. This was true when, in the name of a man who died for love of all human beings, his followers murdered those who disagreed that this was true of him; it is true in a time when people are murdered for the sake of human solidarity. There is obviously no simple answer to this, but I think there are some clues to what makes us willing to murder in the name of truth.

One is our desire to possess truth, rather than serve it. I am increasingly convinced that the need to be right has nothing whatsoever to do with the love of truth. But to face the implications of this means accepting a painful inner emptiness: I am not now what I sense, somehow, I am meant to be. I do not know what I feel from the bottom of my heart, I need to know. The beginning of wisdom is not to flee from this condition or distract yourself from it; it is essential not to fill it up with answers which have not been earned. It is important — even politically important, and it is essential spiritually — to learn how to wait, with empty hands. It is the desire to fill up that emptiness which leads to political or religious fanaticism. By possessing the truth (which is very different from being possessed by it) you anchor yourself; the big hollow winds, the self-doubts are silenced. It is the truths arrived at this way which men kill for.

I suppose at the practical level this means that the insights of monasticism and the mystical tradition must be seen as central to Christianity, not peripheral, as they are ordinarily understood to be. The primary religious question is not "What are we to do?" but "What am I to be?" Arriving at the answer is the struggle of a lifetime, but without the struggle our desire to *do* something can turn easily to murder.

JOHN GARVEY



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**ELECTIONS ARE NOT GOING TO STOP THE ESCALATION**

# El Salvador: paralysis is still the winner

JIM CHAPIN & JACK CLARK

MEDIA COVERAGE of the March 25 elections in El Salvador was far better than the coverage of the elections two years ago. Reporters were better informed about the contending forces in the elections and about the activities of the revolutionaries. Reporters were also more skeptical about the "triumph of democracy" propaganda put forward by the Reagan administration.

Two years ago we wrote in this magazine ("Recounts, Regrets," June 18, 1982) that elections could not work because "the stakes in this conflict are survival for each side. Elections don't solve these kinds of problems. Witness the U.S. elections of 1860." On this point, the general media coverage was much sharper than the last time around. If José Napoleón Duarte wins, there's a distinct possibility of a coup because the army doesn't like his reformist policies, and a certainty of chaos because the economic elite hates him. A victory for the ARENA candidate Roberto D'Aubuisson could lead to a coup because the army fears the cut-off of U.S. aid if the government is headed by the man who is widely believed to have ordered the murder of Archbishop Romero. In neither case could the election solve the problems facing Salvadoran society. Anticipating the election results, the *New Republic* decried their futility: "The Salvadoran government is not holding elections to which nobody comes, but rather elections in which nobody wins."

In both our 1982 election report and our 1983 article ("The El Salvador Labyrinth," June 3, 1983), we discussed the fallacy of a U.S. policy based on renaming a section of the right "the new democratic center." The press hasn't been as sharp as it should have been on this point, but the Reagan administration has been taken to task for practicing this policy to the point of self-parody. In this case, the "vital new force" was Francisco Jose Guerrero of the National Conciliation Party (PCN). The PCN ruled the country from 1961 to 1979 as the favored instrument of the army and the oligarchs, keeping the countryside in the brutal grip of its dreaded paramilitary network ORDEN. When the 1972 elections were stolen from Duarte and his running mate Guillermo Ungo (now the leader of the political arm of the revolutionary opposition), the PCN did the stealing. The 1979 coup which was supposed to reform El Salvador was directed against the PCN. And now, five years later, the U.S. was looking to the PCN as the remedy to the ills caused by its own rule! If Reagan is re-elected, perhaps ARENA may be identified as the "new democratic center" in time for the 1985 Assembly elections.

In our article last June, we also concluded by suggesting that the concept of "Finlandization" might "serve as a useful model for the region." In the Fall 1983 issue of *Foreign Policy*, Tom Farer suggested that the goal of our Central American policy should be "the Finland option." In short, if you find the emergency wisdom familiar, you should. It does seem that everyone in the United States now has a much better idea of what is going on in Central America. Everyone except the executive and legislative branches of the American government. Despite toothless roars about the American mining of Nicaraguan harbors, it is worth noting that even the Democrats in the Senate supported some $90 million more in military aid for the Salvadoran government and more than $20 million for the Nicaraguan "contras" by a vote of 23-18.

So American policy, for the moment, remains unchanged. Which makes it important to examine the specific results of this latest Salvadoran election, to see what it tells us about the progress of the situation in a country in which — should American policy continue on its present track and should Reagan be re-elected — Americans will almost certainly be fighting by this time next year.

This was far from the best election ever held. This time, in fact, the media noted many problems which it "overlooked" last time. Fancy U.S. election procedures were used in a country where the population has been moving (or moved) a lot. Voters' names could not be found on the lists; some estimates had as many as 300,000 voters being turned away

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from the polls. Too bad for them. Not voting is against the law in El Salvador. Some U.S. congressional observers pointed out that voting is also mandatory in Australia and some Western European nations. But those nations, by all accounts, don't have armed death squads to enforce higher turnout. Nor do these militias limit their civic participation to checking i.d.'s for voting stamps. Members of the security forces also like to watch the actual balloting. With transparent voting urns into which one deposits a color-coded ballot, even one folded up, it isn't hard to fathom why some voters might conclude it most prudent to support the party favored by the local militia.

"The important thing is that if there is to be an electoral process, it be observed not only at the moment when people vote, but in all the preliminary aspects that make an election really mean something." That quote fairly summarizes the necessary conditions for democratic elections. When Secretary of State George Shultz spoke those words on February 5, he was, of course, condemning proposed elections in Nicaragua.

Here the administration position goes beyond the ludicrous. Nicaragua, which has curtailed many important freedoms, still has an opposition press, although a censored one. El Salvador has none. The Sandinistas have jailed many of their political opponents. In El Salvador, one per cent of the population has been murdered in the last four years, almost all by paramilitary death squads tied to the Salvadoran government. Imagine the reaction from Shultz if the Archbishop of Managua and half-a-dozen Americans were murdered, and Sandinista defectors traced the killings to the highest levels of the Nicaraguan government!

With all these problems, however, the elections do tell us something about the present state of Salvadoran politics and society. One thing that stands out is that the political divisions on the government side of the civil war have shifted very little since 1982. All three major parties drew about the same share of the national vote as they did two years ago, and this similarly extended down to the provincial level. In only three of the fourteen provinces did the Christian Democratic vote vary as much as 5 percent up or down from 1982. In fact, the combined PDC vote in the thirteen provinces outside the metropolitan province of San Salvador went from 39.3 pecent to 39.2 percent. In San Salvador, however, the PDC vote jumped by some nine points, to an absolute majority, and since the San Salvador vote as a proportion of the national vote also rose, the result was a 3 percent gain for the Christian Democrats at the national level.

The other two major parties, the PCN of Guerrero and the farther-right ARENA of Roberto D'Aubuisson, also turned in national percentages very close to their 1982 showings. ARENA's vote moved up or down by more than 5 points in six of the fourteen provinces. In all six, the PCN vote moved in the opposite direction by more than 5 points. Obviously, these two parties of the right are competing for the same social base.

NOT ONLY in regard to relative party strength but voter turnout as well, the patterns visible in 1982 were, if anything, more marked in the latest election. The area of high turnout was seven provinces in a bloc from the west to the center of the country. In areas where the Christian Democrats did best, the turnout was highest. These include the areas of denser population, greater modernization, and historically of the greatest resistance to the oligarchy. The seven provinces with lower turnout included the east and the north provinces where the oligarchy exterminated native populations earlier and more thoroughly. Six of these latter seven provinces were among the top seven PCN provinces; only two among the top seven PDC provinces. ARENA, which last time tended to do better in low turnout areas, also seemed to have "modernized" its vote a bit, perhaps a reflection of the help it has gotten from right-wing figures in the United States.

The seven provinces with low turnout and low density, are, of course, the areas in which the guerrillas have the upper hand. It does seem that the evolution of Salvadoran politics has the old oligarchy in a bind. Even in this controlled electoral system, urbanization and modernization tend to favor the Christian Democrats (and probably would favor parties of the left in an open system). The floods of refugees into these areas introduce even more "uncontrolled" elements; so those who were prevented from voting were more likely PDC than not. At the same time, the guerrillas are successfully taking away significant portions of the right's traditional stamping grounds. Ruben Zamora, the left Christian Democrat who is one of the chief spokesmen for the political arm of the revolutionary opposition, claims that between 70 and 90 of the 251 Salvadoran municipalities are in the opposition's hands. On the basis of this election, his claim has some validity.

The right engaged in apocalyptic anti-Christian Democrat rhetoric in this election, calling it the final choice between Communism and freedom. From their point of view, they may have been correct. They are dependent on the American government, and that government will not permit them the mass slaughter which alone might save their position. Even the barest traces of "democratization" in the countryside open a seething social cauldron, because the traditional politics of El Salvador has rested on the century-old ability of the oligarchy

PERHAPS the most shocking refuge we visited was San Roque, on the outskirts on San Salvador. There, 250 people, suspected of being subversive have been living in the basement of a church for three years and cannot appear in public for fear of being killed. The building is constantly under police surveillance. These refugees suffer from continuous food shortages and lack of medicine. Because of limited access to daylight and bad lighting conditions, many are experiencing problems with their eyesight. Despite this dehumanizing situation, the refugees maintain a remarkable sense of hope — born out of their deep faith in God. They believe that out of their suffering will come the liberation of El Salvador.

*–From a report by Art Laffin on a trip to El Salvador with four other members of the Catholic Peace Fellowship*



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to kill "uppity" members of the peasantry. A murderous as things have been in El Salvador in recent years, they have not come near the levels necessary for the right to re-establish "traditional" society there.

The issue in Salvadoran society is survival. Someone will win, and someone will lose. Losing does not mean joining a loyal opposition; rather it means the destruction of social-political forces of hundreds of leaders and thousands of activists. In El Salvador today, there are armed groups representing almost every variety of politics spawned in the last two centuries: Maoism, Communism, social democracy, Christian democracy, liberalism, conservatism, fascism, feudal oligarchy, and so on. Even the best election cannot bridge differences of such magnitude.

IF THE May 6 runoff elections are conducted "fairly" it is likely that Duarte will win. It should be noted that, were he to face a run-off with Guerrero rather than D'Aubuisson, that would not be the case. But D'Aubuisson is far enough right to alienate some moderate elements in the PCN, and to scare enough of the armed forces, so that they will opt for Duarte as the lesser of evils. But all that is likely to do is to return El Salvador to the governmental paralysis of 1980-82.

The current government of Alvaro Magaña, after all, was elected by no one. After the 1982 elections, the right-wing parties, *en bloc*, were in the process of forming a government when the American government prevented them from doing so and installed Magaña. It's very likely that the U.S. embassy will again have to cobble together some coalition of those who would murder each other (and do) once outside the room. In a political system without the left and left-center, the right retains its majority, and will probably get a majority of seats in the 1985 Assembly elections. And Duarte's only hope in dealing with the army is American pressure; he may get enough to save his life, but almost certainly not enough to enable him to govern effectively.

Current U.S. policy claims to promote independence, democracy, and modernization, revolutionary goals in the third world now, revolutionary goals which our own country fought a revolution and a civil war to advance. If our claims were true, that would amount to a major shift in the reality of our Latin American policy for the last century. The only consistent thread of that policy, as Robert Dahl has recently pointed out, has been support of right-wing authoritarian governments and opposition to left-wing governments, whether democratic or authoritarian.

The only cases where American policy has matched American rhetoric in carrying out modernizing and democratic reforms have been cases of clear conquest, such as Germany and Japan. When Douglas MacArthur was military governor of Japan, he was not thinking of protecting the interests of traditional conservative elites of army and landowners, but rather of dispersing them. A full-scale occupation of El Salvador by the U.S. might produce similar results; chances are more likely that the instinct to protect local elites is so ingrained that it would not.

If all this seems to belabor the obvious, perhaps the obvious needs some more working over. A very dangerous game of escalation is going on in Central America. The nation which fought two wars over the issue of freedom of the seas is now mining harbors and international waters. The world community condemns this as outlaw activity; Nicaragua goes to the World Court, Congress complains; Reaganites don't admit what they're doing, but justify it in theory as defending El Salvador against Nicaraguan attack. (By the same theory, Russia could mine our harbors because we are "attacking" Afghanistan!)

In this context, it is important to look hard at Reagan's claim that his policy represents "toughness" while those who oppose it are "naive." The reality is almost exactly the reverse. Reagan and his supporters hang on to a naive fantasy that somehow democracy will take root and the guerrillas disappear, and the grinding war will come to an end. As we keep it up, the government and its forces slowly disintegrate under the grinding.

With adequate arms, it's still possible for military forces to wipe out major portions of their opposition. But this slaughter does not recreate the old social system, now gone forever. "You can do anything with a bayonet except sit on it." The result is an immense social vacuum. If we remain determined to win, that vacuum can be filled for a time with U.S. troops.

An April 9 Defense Department statement indicates that the administration is preparing to make just such a troop commitment in Central America a live option. Honduras has already been built up over the past two years to serve as a base for such an operation. Nicaragua's Sandinista government cannot be overthrown with the current level of harassment, and, given the logic of our position in El Salvador, intervention in El Salvador makes no sense without intervention in Nicaragua (the "source" of all the troubles in El Salvador, according to the Reaganites). El Salvador cannot be "saved" indefinitely with meaningless elections and $90 million aid packages. The logic of our policy since 1980 leads inexorably to military involvement in both nations.

But even "victory" does not end the problems in these nations. Two of the greatest foreign policy victories of the Eisenhower administration were in Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954. But our reinstallation of the Shah led to the Khomeinei regime in the end, while the victory in Guatemala has led to worsening chaos and destruction for the last thirty years. Ultimately, social vacuums are filled by strong dictators. "Lucky" societies end up with Francos; "unlucky" ones with Pol Pots or Somozas, and are worse off after the dictator than they were before.

We opened by congratulating ourselves on our prescience in analyzing events in El Salvador. But we would be happier to be wrong than right now. For, given Reagan's present policy, we see American troops in place in 1985. The U.S. government will keep on carrying out disastrous policies because it can't think of anything else. As in Vietnam. As in Lebanon. All demonstrating once more Isaac Asimov's dictum: "Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent."



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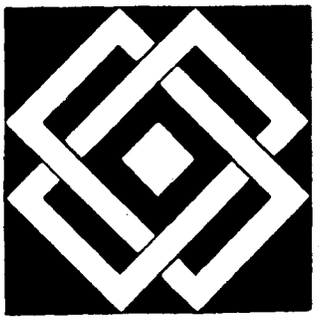

# The God beyond

DANIEL J. O'HANLON

WHO CAN SPEAK of God without becoming ridiculous? And yet, when what is at issue is the deepest meaning of our lives, and when, like it or not, important shifts are taking place which shape our understanding of God, is not that ridiculousness worth risking? Aristotle observes (curiously enough, in his treatment on the parts of animals) that even a little of knowledge about the highest reality is more valuable than a computerful of data about trivialities (my own free translation). And paradoxically, even our very awareness of the way we stutter and squirm in our efforts to speak of God is a step forward. It alerts us to the never-to-be-forgotten fact that God is always beyond our best words and concepts. Emboldened by all this, let me proceed to comment on two contemporary phenomena which, I believe, are pushing us toward an expansion and enrichment of our understanding of God. They are, first, the disintegration and even the collapse of many structures which shape our human existence; and second the impact of the women's movement.

First, then, consider the collapse of structures, a many-sided phenomenon. I use the word "structure" not in the strict sociological sense, but in the large sense, large enough to include social institutions like marriage and family and the relations of the sexes; ecclesiastical institutions such as dioceses, parishes, basic communities, forms of ministry, and the like; ritual structures like liturgy; verbal-conceptual structures such as theology; unarticulated conceptual and symbolic structures like beliefs and prejudices; normative structures like moral principles and structures of personal prayer. All these structures, and this list is incomplete, have been radically shaken up in the last couple of decades. What effect is that having on our understanding of God?

One way to put it is that in all these areas we have been moving from a God who was there largely to vouch for the structures as they stood, simply to impose them and to guard them. Many of these structures formerly had a kind of inviolability, and attention was given largely, if not mostly, to the structures themselves. God was there, certainly, but seen more out of the corner of our eye than directly head-on.

FATHER DANIEL J. O'HANLON, S.J., teaches systematic theology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, California.

As these structures have been increasingly relativized, some people have simply lost their bearings, and God himself (or herself) has faded from view. In their need, not a few people have been drawn to passing fads. But for others, the experience has been more positive. It has meant turning attention from the collapsing structures to the reality of God in direct personal experience. Let me spell this out in more detail.

In social structures such as marriage, family, and relations between the sexes, older norms and standards which once came from church, family, and friends have lost much of the social pressure which supported their observance. This is especially evident in the attitude of the younger generation. But even professional moral theologians, who formerly, when pressed to solve a difficulty, used to reach routinely for an encyclical, now are compelled to dig deeper. So many new situations now arise and so many new questions are being posed that moral theologians, like ordinary religious men and women, are now frequently forced willy-nilly to a first-hand examination of their experience, both personal and communal.

And when that project is seriously undertaken, God is always a part of the process. St. Ignatius, in his Spiritual Exercises, when he is guiding those who make them toward a decision about their life, wants them to deal directly with their Creator and Lord. The times we are living in are such that all of us, if we would lead lives of responsible integrity, must more frequently and more profoundly deal directly with our Creator and Lord. We must relate to this divine presence not merely as the custodian of a set of fixed regulations, but more and more as the source of our clarity and guidance in difficult and complex choices.

Something similar is happening as ecclesiastical institutions have become increasingly relativized. Through the impact of the Second Vatican Council, the ecumenical movement, the charismatic renewal, basic communities, the diminishing number of priests, and the new developments in ministry brought about by all this, church structures which we used to regard as divinely established no longer seem so absolutely sacrosanct. Many of us remember a time, for instance, when the vernacular liturgy seemed quite inconceivable. But now the stakes are higher. As the decades have rolled by, more and more of the traditional church structures for ministry, for teaching, and for organizational direction have come to be seen as means to an end, means which can be changed even



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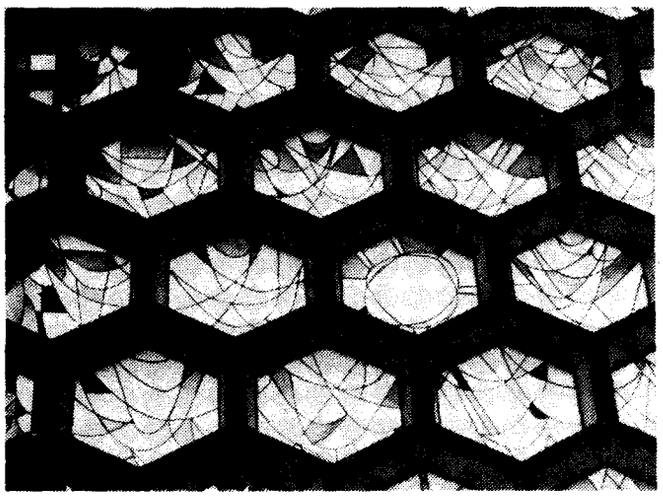
radically. My point here is not to either defend or criticize this phenomenon, but to note again what it is doing to our understanding of and our relation to God.

One can react to this phenomenon in two different ways. If God has been for us too closely identified with these structures, then when the structures vanish or significantly change, our idols are smashed, and our God is in danger of vanishing with them. But God need not vanish in the process. Such an experience can help us to attend more fully to the reality of God, which, after all, is why such structures are there in the first place. "Let nothing upset you," St. Teresa of Avila tells us, "Let nothing frighten you. Everything is changing; God alone is changeless."

STRUCTURES OF PRAYER are changing too, as we can see from the sudden worldwide popularity of Anthony de Mello's *Sadhana* book (which has been translated into nineteen languages and has seen twelve editions in English). In addition to a variety of devotional styles and modes of praying with the imagination, a great deal of emphasis is placed in this book on nonconceptual and nonverbal awareness meditation, which relates us to God in quite a different way. Although this prayer has antecedents in the Christian tradition, especially in the Eastern church, it is more typical of Hindu and Buddhist meditation. Now there is a direct correlation between the way in which we relate to God and the way in which we exist and have our own being, between the qualities we see in our God, and the qualities which grow in ourselves. If God is for us the Holy Mystery within, our own inwardness and inner wealth unfolds. If the God into whom we let ourselves drop is beyond words and concepts and gender, our own spirit loses many of its restrictive boundaries of thought and feeling. Often when we deal with God "personally," we are unconsciously projecting on God our own limitations. And there is no guarantee that the Jesus we visualize and re-create in our imaginations is always the real Jesus, that he is not to some extent the creation of our own distorted fancy. So this kind of meditation, in which we put aside our own images, concepts, words, and judgments about God and expose ourselves patiently and directly to his incomprehensible but intimately present and powerfully working reality, is a healthy counterbalance. Such prayer is also a concrete expression of our conviction that God always stands at the door and knocks, that the first initiative comes from God, that if we can come to him with unobstructed openness and freed from attachment to our own petty thoughts and desires, the divine Presence will invade us as the sea surrounding an empty sponge.



These important new developments in the prayer of large numbers of Christians are of a piece with the shifts we have already enumerated, in which specific structures of social and religious reality have yielded to more simple and direct experience. It seems that ages like ours, ages of chaos and radical change, are normally accompanied by direct and primary experience of the reality of God. For in such times (fourteenth century Europe would be another example), everything else, including our words and concepts about God, is clearly revealed for what it is: changeable and impermanent.

One final example of how we in our times have been experiencing the collapse, or at least the relativization of structures, is theology. Before Vatican II it was considered daring to speak of a pluralism of theologies. I can remember publishing a short popular piece in a Catholic magazine around the time of Vatican II and having the editor, not a closed or narrow person by any stretch of the imagination, cautioning me against writing of Catholic theologies in the plural. But now it is quite ordinary to talk and write that way. Not that all theologies are equally satisfactory, but we rather generally recognize now that there is more than one legitimate way to speak theologically about God and the things of God.

We theologians, whether we called ourselves dogmatic, scholastic, or systematic theologians, have consistently asserted that speaking of God is analogical talk, and falls infinitely short of the reality itself. But once we had made all the necessary qualifications and acknowledged our limitations in speaking of God, we sometimes forgot all that and acted as though we were constructing precise and fairly complete accounts of what God is really like. We were tempted to feel that this was a more accurate way of speaking of God than the rather primitive parabolic language of Scripture, full of metaphor and myth, story and parable. There was a time, and perhaps it has not yet disappeared, when no one in Western Christianity dared claim to be doing theology if he or she failed to use the accepted mode of abstract rational conceptual discourse which was honored as serious theology. But now we see a greater variety of approaches. Story and metaphor, archetype and koan are being explored more sympathetically as possibly legitimate modes of theological discourse. And concurrently with all this, direct experience itself is once again highlighted as *an* essential, even *the* primary theological source.

Of course, as we choose what Peter Berger has called the inductive option and turn more directly to religious experience, it becomes more and more difficult to find satisfactory language to speak of God. We are also faced with the subtle task of sorting out and evaluating our experience. In any case, we end up, it seems, when speaking of the divine, talking out



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of both sides of our mouth: he is far, she is near; she is empty, he is full; God is death, God is life.

THE SECOND INFLUENCE which in our time is shifting our understanding of God is the women's movement.

Now and again, particularly in the context of group prayer, when I hear words like, "We pray to God that in her loving-kindness she will console and comfort us," I realize clearly, from my own personal response, that the gender we use in addressing God does make a difference. All the words we use about God are, of course, incomplete and inadequate, but each one we use evokes in us an awareness of different aspects of that inexhaustible reality. We can address God as father, mother, brother, sister, friend, lover, divine child, eternal rock, and no one of these titles is adequate, yet each one provides yet another window on the endless riches of God that lie beyond naming. Because of the patriarchal character of the cultures in which God has manifested himself to us — and by us I mean here especially the so-called "religions of the Book": Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, beginning with Abraham — our understanding of God has suffered from one-sidedness. Correspondingly, the qualities which have developed in ourselves, in our cultures, and in our churches have been too one-sidedly masculine. We suffer from a lack of the feminine, and speaking of God in exclusively masculine terms supports and perpetuates this imbalance. I will be reckless enough to name a few of what I consider masculine traits: rationality, aggressiveness, competitiveness, power, and control; and corresponding feminine traits: intuition, receptivity, a wholistic grasp of reality, empathy, and communion.

How did we come to the present state of an over-masculinized culture? Here is the briefest of sketches of what some well-known scholars have told us. The very earliest sculptures which archaeologists have unearthed in probing the origins of our race are feminine figurines, the first objects of worship of Homo Sapiens. Civilization at this stage, they tell us, was woman-centered, and men were, as Joseph Campbell puts it, one jot away from insignificance.

Then in time the myth of the Great Chthonic Mother, a myth in which no one succeeds in breaking free to independence of her, was overcome by a new myth, the Hero Myth. The Hero broke through, refused any longer to be "Momma's boy," and asserted an independent ego. This shift, thought to have taken hold somewhere in the second millennium B.C., initiated the period in which we still find ourselves, especially in the West: the age of patriarchy and the Father God, of the aggressive, competitive, independent, controlling ego, an ego no longer simply a part of the community living a common half-conscious myth, but now rational, cerebral, aware, and in charge.

To move from an earlier consciousness submerged in the Great Mother and all she represented to an independent ego was at that time a step forward. Furthermore, the massive outpouring of blood in human sacrifice that accompanied the cult of the Great Mother should not be forgotten in romantic nostalgia for a pre-patriarchal age. Nevertheless, the move was not made without considerable loss. Transcending the Great Mother is one thing. Repressing her is another. The Western ego did not just gain freedom from the Great Smother, if we can invent that name for the side of her that needed to be suppressed; it also severed its deep interconnectedness with her. There was no longer harmony with the Heavens, but a "conquering of space," no longer a respect for Nature, but a technological assault on Nature. The theme, words, and structures of the Great Mother corpus are simply left out of subsequent Western mythology.

So the situation to which we have been brought through an overemphasis on masculine traits clearly calls out for some kind of counterbalance. Something other than aggressive, competitive rationality is called for. Unfortunately, when we think of something that is not rational, something that is not an independent ego, we, echoing the fears of Freud and most orthodox psychology, think that this is necessarily a step backward. In some cases it surely is, but what we need to realize is that there is a dimension of ourselves, and of our awareness of God, which is not rational, not prerational, not subrational but *trans*rational or contemplative. It is distinguished from the prerational or subrational not by being less aware and awake, but more so. Can we not hope that as the male once rescued consciousness from the earthbound matriarchate, so today the female might help rescue consciousness from the patriarchate? We need a new hero myth. The dragon we must now fight is one-sided aggressive ego-centeredness itself. We need liberation, in Merton's words, from "our inordinate self-consciousness, from our monumental self-awareness, and from our obsession with self-affirmation." We need to develop intuition and alert but passive awareness as we yesterday needed to develop assertive logic and an active mentality. The lead in this new development can come most easily from the female, since our society is already so strongly masculine.

One effective way to move in that direction is to allow ourselves to acknowledge and relate to the feminine traits of God, to her compassionate and unconditional love for us, to her dimension of mystery, which can be touched by no rational effort but only by loving contemplation; to her presence to and reverence for our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit as one; to her nourishing and life-giving care for us; to her sensitive intuition, which tunes in perfectly and is empathetic to our every need; to her desire not to be Master and Lord, but intimate companion and friend.

It will take us a while, with some trial and error, to get used to the idea of addressing God with female names, titles, and images, particularly in public, shared worship. However, I think it is well worth the trouble, since it will make us aware, in God and in ourselves, of qualities that are badly needed in our competitive, aggressive, indeed obscenely violent world. The popular notion of God, especially when it is connected with national loyalty, still contains strong echoes of the powerful war God who is on our side and will violently destroy those who oppose us. Do you think that Jesus would recognize as his Father the immensely popular God of *Star Wars*, the Force,



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whose principal function seems to be to help us to blow to colorful smithereens all those who are not on our side? Do we even notice how much aggressive violence is taken for granted as a component of our recreation, entertainment, and our national life?

The more we accustom ourselves to images of God which counteract this destructive kind of power-God, the better. Feminine images of God can be helpful here. At present I notice a tendency to deal with the matter of gender in addressing God by simply eliminating both genders. But to me, although neutering God in the kind of prayer in which we address God as person may be a necessary initial tactic, it is not the goal. For in this kind of prayer, in which we address God person-to-person, we enrich our understanding not by diminishing but by multiplying titles. Silent awareness contemplation is another matter.

One concluding observation about the women's movement: in discussing the ways in which the disintegration of structures has been pushing us toward a more direct and immediate attention to God, we noted the renewed significance given to religious experience. Women tell us that this element has been an especially strong one for them. Most of the structures in our society and church were shaped by a male culture, so that for men the structures, even when they became shaky, still provided a bridge or a foothold while moving to something else. One could hold back a little more and a little longer from immediate experience. But women, for the most part, as women, did not have this kind of bridge for themselves.

To create appropriate structures for themselves, whether linguistic, ritual, symbolic, or normative, was largely a matter of starting from scratch. So experience, their own personal experience, almost necessarily became a primary resource. And that experience, I think, has helped all of us to return with greater confidence to God as the one we find when we open ourselves up to our own personal and communal experience.

NOW THAT WE have taken a look at these two current trends which are reshaping our understanding of God, one final question: are these shifts leading us toward or away from an authentically Christian understanding of God? The test for us Christians is always found in the person of Jesus, since he is for us both the face of God, and the exemplar of the right human understanding of and attitude toward God.

What about the shifts occasioned by the disintegration of structures? This concern is familiar for Jesus as we see him in the Gospels. Over and over again he warns against attachment to old strucures, to idolization of the law, and is radical in calling us back to direct experience of God. Not legal prescriptions, not ritual forms, not rote prayers, but direct contact with the Father, and openness to the Spirit who enlivens our loving relationships to each other — that is what Jesus preaches and shows as the right human attitude toward God. He acknowledges the mystery of God by speaking of him in parable and paradox, and by frequent use of questions rather than statements.

What about the enrichment of our understanding of God which the women's movement is bringing about? This too corresponds to the kind of God we come to know through Jesus. He addresses God as Abba, no macho title, and he sees his Father as a tender God with a motherly concern for all, sending his rain on all alike, counting the hairs on our heads, caring for us with more concern than for the birds of the air or the lilies of the field. Jesus himself, as the window through which we see and feel God shining on us, is no warrior king, but a humble empathic friend who serves us, nurtures us, lays down his life for us, and feeds us with his own body and blood. We see in Jesus that our God is not the commander-in-chief of an army that achieves its ends by brute force but one who wins us by the gentle but strong power of unconditional love.

Can we not then recognize that developments in our understanding of God, and particularly those which make us aware of her nonviolent feminine qualities, challenge us to begin to catch up with the understanding of God which was already exemplified in Jesus, but which, for many reasons, never had a chance to come into its own?

Nancy G. Westerfield

**Amnesty**

In the parlor, the cucumbrous cat
And the old man sharing the warm
Upholstered lap of sofa together,
Sat listening to Scarlatti: the violins
Scratching the ears of cat so they pricked
To patrol the upper registers of music
And the soft scratch of landing by dark
Outside. At this hour, the aliens came.
That he of all humankind and his piebald
Cat should have gone out and met
That nighttime descent from space, is both
The planet's disgrace and possible salvation.
Nothing of knowledges exchanged their gifts,
As would have if someone went versed
In basic linguistics, information theory and sets,
Artificial intelligence (but their intelligence
Is not artificial, the old man protests;
They are pronouns same as us.).
Some Erse he knew and spoke seemed to provoke
Their smiles (whatever it takes for a face,
They have it, he says, and refuses
To elaborate). The cat, speaking ears
Dexterously enough, was spoken with, handled,
And unalarmed. Amnesty granted, the aliens
Took off (he says: kind of a shuttle bus,
And closes his mouth). A scratched nudge
In Scarlatti records a cosmic near miss.



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## OF TOMBS, BASKETS, & RESURRECTION IN POLAND

# Martial law Easter

THOMAS R. SWICK

HOLY WEEK IN POLISH does not possess the varied nomenclature of days that it does in English: they are each of them "Great," with no distinction, for instance, between "Maundy" and "Good."

On Great Friday afternoon, therefore, in the Year of Martial Law 1982, I went with my wife and our friends, Marek and Danuta, to visit the "tombs" in the churches of Warsaw's Old Town. The churches dominate these narrow, reconstructed streets of cobblestone, not only in size but number. It was in St. Anne's, the Academic Church which stands at the top of the entrance square, that the tradition of "tombs" began. Clandestinely and at great risk, Polish artists came every Great Friday of the German Occupation to decorate in a personal way the grave of Christ. It was a time during which the Easter message of suffering and resurrection carried an irresistible meaning for Poles. As with so many Polish religious traditions, this one has not only continued, but flourished.

We took our place at the end of a long queue stretching out of St. Anne's, from which point we could see queues for the other churches traced across the square below. The early April sky would turn dark with thunderclouds, sending down on us thick wet flakes of spring snow, then would open up to an intense, wintry blue. "Like a kaleidoscope," the Poles say, and I remembered my wife's aunt's warning earlier in the week: "Whenever Easter and Passover coincide, the weather is miserable." As novel as it was for me to be queueing to look at church crafts, it seemed at the same time the most appropriately spent Good Friday I'd ever known.

At St. Anne's, we were led past the tomb, like mourners paying our last respects, after a half hour's wait. It consisted of a plaster-white column topped with a gold cross, draped in black, atop of which sat the Polish eagle, crown intact. A crown of thorns circled the column with three ribbons enwrapped in it, two of black and one long one red and white, the national colors, that trailed down to the floor to decorate the slain body of Christ.

At the Warsaw Cathedral, a tomb featured Christ recumbent on the cold stone floor of a side altar, surrounded by potted geraniums and bathed in a blood-red spotlight.

St. Martin's Church, on the next street over, displayed a tall, thin wooden cross, from the left arm of which hung an anchor, symbol of the wartime resistance movement, and from the right arm the chalk-written dates 56, 68, 70, 76, 80, with a space left for the inevitable one to follow. People approached the cross, stood for a minute or two in silence, and then passed on.

GREAT SATURDAY is the Polish day of "blessing the baskets." We made one up at home with the necessary ingredients: bread, kielbasa, eggs (painted), salt (on a little dish), with sprigs of dill and parsley planted throughout, and a white linen cloth to cover the top. What a pretty sight that wicker basket of peasant fare was to someone brought up on synthetic green straw and pink marshmallow chicks.

We took it to our neighborhood church, passing parishioners coming back with their own delicate, high-handled baskets. At the church's front doors there was a ceaseless flow of people entering and exiting. Inside we found solid commotion. At one side restless altar boys stood behind tables laden with capsules of holy water; at the other a crowd surrounded a long table, presided over by a young, soft-spoken priest. When that group dispersed we inched our way (how often one is in company in Poland) to the front and made our contribution to the table rapidly refilling with paschal offerings. From a distance the baskets had looked almost identical, but here, under closer examination, they were seen as truly varied, with eggs of diverse artistry, lace intricacies overlapping some sides, bright green shoots of dill, and the occasional lamb standing honorifically in the center. I swept my eye restlessly over that collective, vernal Easter spread.

The priest read a few prayers, took up the broom-like sprinkler, dipped it in holy water, and then waved it vigorously up and down the length of the table. He invoked the customary wishes of the holiday, ending them with the unusual benediction (to me) of "Tasty eggs!" I was to hear it in the next few days as a common Easter greeting among friends, along with the even more improbable "Merry eggs!"

AT FOUR O'CLOCK Sunday morning I went out alone to attend the Cathedral Mass. I walked through our silent, empty neighborhood and had that rare sensation of feeling that I was the first person up in the city. All was dark. I took a spot midway between the tram stop and the bus stop in a vehicleless world. At last a taxi approached and I waved it over.

THOMAS R. SWICK, *a free lance writer, lived serveral years in Poland.*



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"So early?" the driver asked.

"To the Resurrection!" I said. "One must get there early."

I had overestimated the difficulties of getting downtown, and I found myself locked out of the Cathedral on a blustery and ill-lit street. I prowled that hallowed quarter for awhile and, when I returned to the Cathedral, joined two small elderly women who banged with undue ferocity upon the portals. They opened shortly to take us in, unveiling an impassive young priest who commented: "You could have still slept."

I found myself a pew not too close, nor, I thought, too conspicuous, until an aged ostiary approached.

"Good day, sir, and Happy Easter to you. Can I ask you, sir, to carry a banner in the procession? Five men are needed."

When I confessed unfamiliarity with the program, he cocked his head closer, and I saw that he was greatly deaf. I repeated my refusal several times, until the necessary holler, rebounding off the Gothic walls, penetrated the good man's eardrum. At his departure I reflected that of all that was to be said today in that great sanctuary, the first truly audible words had been mine, pleading benightedness.

The procession, which I had come to see, was long and impressive. It was led by a crucifer and a priest carrying a small statue of Christ standing. Then the five banner bearers, the banners like dusty sails atop their lengthy poles. All were kept upright except for one slung over the shoulder of a white-robed, long-haired young woman. Rows of priests followed. Behind them came a group of six hoary elders in black suits, grey silk ties, and white gloves, each clutching the wooden pole of a six-pointed cloth canopy. Beneath the canopy the bishop walked, bearing, with his elbows pointed outwards, the heavy gold cross. Another formal gentleman hung on each arm in a posture of support.

They were followed — as winter then to spring — by a dozen young girls in Mazowsze folk dress; flowered vests and thick cloth skirts of bold red, green, and orange stripes. Then came a troupe of six little girls in white dresses and floral head wreaths. Their leader carried a small basket of dried flowers, and every six or seven steps would turn and gamely toss the cuttings at her charges, strewing the stone floor. The girls, at each toss, would fall quietly to one knee.

The Mass lasted two hours and contained one hymn familiar to me, "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today," sung more slowly and with more solemnity than I had ever heard it. At the dismissal, we were asked to remember those who could not be with their families this holiday.

EASTER BREAKFAST was at Marek and Danuta's. They lived in a "Gomulka," as the tiny apartments are called that were constructed during his reign. Its archival aspect was enhanced by the collection their son had established and proudly displayed on the lone lampshade of the living room, a collectionof badges and pins from the Solidarity era. (In what other country do everyday objects become so quickly the stuff of history?) One read on that shade with a not yet ripened wistfulness such familiar slogans as "Soviet Tanks, No Thanks," "I love the Soviet Union," and the brash epithet that had been the hit of the previous spring, "Anti-Socialist Element." Atop the piano I found a small slip of paper slightly larger than a postage stamp. The top half carried a black and white depiction of the pope, the bottom half the words; "Solidarity wishes you faith and hope in these Easter days of 1982."

"Solidarity lives," said Marek, noticing my wonderment.

"Where did you get it?"

"From colleagues at work." he replied, nonchalantly.

My wife's aunt passed around a plate of quartered, hard-boiled eggs. When each guest had a slice, he offered it to his neighbor, who took a bite, and then kissed the other back three times on the cheek (occasionally leaving a smudge of yolk) while extending all good wishes. Then the receiver of the egg would offer part of his own, and the process was repeated. In this way we worked our way around the room. (The same procedure is carried out on Christmas Eve, with a wafer.) I found the usage of an egg somehow gave an ingenuous appeal.

GREAT MONDAY is a holiday throughout Poland and, as on All Souls' Day, businesses and offices are closed. Traditionally it is the day of Smigus Dyngus, when it is the custom for young boys to douse girls with buckets of water. (One can find an occasional postcard with a colorful woodcut of youthful peasants cavorting about a well.) Most city people claim that the drenching is carried on now only in the villages,


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Joyce Rothschild-Whitt
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though my wife, a few years back, had a small bottle of perfume emptied on her as she made her way to the tram.

All weekend the citizens of Warsaw had been in expectation of another incarnation of sorts — Solidarity's. Walking in the Old Town on Saturday, we had seen a notice, taped to a wall, of the first underground radio broadcast, planned for this evening. By Sunday, similar notices had appeared in most of the churches. At breakfast when my wife mentioned casually that the broadcast was tonight, her aunt cried; "At nine o'clock on frequency seven!" and nearly toppled her tea.

In the evening we went to dinner at Uncle Zbyszek and Aunt Basia's in Mokotow, the southern borough of Warsaw which, though we had no way of knowing it then, was to enjoy the greatest reception of the broadcast. At eight we sat down to bigos, a sort of hunter's stew.

"Real Polish bigos," said Uncle Zbyszek, advertising the dish to the foreigner.

"Ha, real. For these days real," said Aunt Basia.

"Real Polish wartime bigos," he corrected himself, and executed a head bow in deference to his wife.

Joining us at the table was their son Andrzej, who was visiting from a small town outside Poznan. As often happens among Poles of different regions, they compared food stocks.

"Warsaw is plentiful compared to Sweibodzin," he said.

"All we have in the shops are shelves of vinegar."

"So that's where it is. We haven't seen it for awhile."

"There's very little food. No shampoo."

"What about toothpaste?"

"Toothpaste? It's not a necessity," he said, then added laughing, "If you don't eat, what do you need toothpaste for? It's funny, isn't it?"

He and Uncle Zbyszek began checking their watches a good twenty minutes before nine; at five to, we all moved into the adjoining room. Uncle Zbyszek fiddled with the dial of what looked like a prewar radio; Andrzej manipulated the antenna; his mother, seated in the corner, took up her knitting, my wife and I settled on the couch. There was a terrible burst of static ("Just like during the Occupation," said Uncle Zbyszek) before a female voice came through that we knew as "ours." She gave instructions: if you can hear well, blink your apartment lights three times; if you can hear moderately well, blink them twice; if you have difficulty hearing, blink them once. Andrzej ran to turn off all the lights, and then blinked them three times. We had a view onto a back lot, so we could not gauge the response, though later we were to hear that the large ten-story apartment complexes to the south of us had twinkled like space stations.

The words, coming through distant yet clear, had a mesmerizing effect on us, not so much by what they spoke, but simply by the fact that they spoke. Aunt Basia, a perennially dour woman, looked up from her knitting with a smile triumphant, and wordlessly we looked from one to another with marvel. Andrzej stood motionless in the middle of the room, his one hand extended in a gesture of silence, though no one had spoken for minutes.

It didn't matter that barely any news was reported (the announcer turned the segment over to a balladeer). It was a news broadcast in which the biggest news was the broadcast itself. For days after people talked not of what they had heard, but that they had heard (and how well they had heard), and not of what they would hear, but that they would hear, again. A brave voice emitting from a secreted and widely-hunted chamber had been transmitted clandestinely over the city's air waves and spoken to the suffering of resurrection.

## Stage

# REWARDING SALESMEN

### NEW FROM MAMET, OLD FROM MILLER

"WHAT ARE we saying here?" Teach says in *American Buffalo*. "Business." The lines come in the middle of one of Teach's bursts of pseudo-rationality in which he uses loaded words to persuade Donny to abandon his young friend Bobby and make a deal with Teach. The deal in this, the best of Mamet's plays, is a burglary which, given the playwright's preoccupation with losers, is going to be a fiasco. Mamet, who contradicts himself from interview to interview, told the *New York Times* (January 15, 1978) that *Buffalo* "is about the American ethic of business," and so it is, although it is about many other things including, most importantly, the connection between language and behavior. In Mamet's new play, *Glengarry Glen Ross,* his most accomplished work since *Buffalo*, there is no doubt that "the American ethic of business" is a central subject.

*Glengarry Glen Ross*, which gets its name from a shady land development in Florida, concerns a group of salesmen in a sleazy real estate company for whom words are weapons — the blunt instruments of obscenity or the stilettos of lying locutions — and victory is measured in psychological as well as material rewards. The decorations in this war are getting one's name on the board, and not to be there is to be banished to the company of losers where one is assigned mediocre leads which give little possibility of sales that might rescue one from failure. There is desperation in the successful salesmen as well as in the unsuccessful ones, as the intensity of the language indicates, and they are willing to feed on one another as obviously as they do on their customers. Bribery and theft are not even a giant's step away from the hard-sell tactics of their trade.

Mamet introduces his characters in three scenes, set in a Chinese restaurant, in which one of each of the three pairs is an almost uncontrollable voice washing over the relative taciturnity of the other. By the end of the first act, we have seen a star salesman devour a customer, watched a fallen star try to buy his way back to the board, and heard one salesman propose that another join him in burglarizing the office for the leads that can



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be sold to another company. In the second act, we listen as Shelly Levene, the fallen star — beautifully played by Robert Prosky (but then the performances are uniformly fine) — traps himself with a slip of his non-stop tongue, the aggressive beseeching of Act I having given way to crowing triumph over a presumably solid sale. As Teach says, "All that I'm saying, don't confuse business with pleasure."

At the end of *American Buffalo,* after Teach's need has pushed him from words to violence, Donny rejects him and turns protectively to Bobby. Love — fatherly, avuncular, whatever — has triumphed over the platitudes of success. In *Glengarry,* too, human feeling is finally stronger than greed. The office manager, who has been willing to accept Shelly's money in Act I, now turns him in for burglary despite the escalation of the offered bribe. His explanation: "I hate you." Such an ending hardly offers the lift and warmth that *American Buffalo* does, but however negative the officer manager's emotion, it does signal that there are human beings here, trapped and struggling beneath the presumed primacy of money as motivation and reward.

In the condemnatory context of this setting, the possibility of other rewards may seem doubtful. Yet there is a revealing scene in Act II in which Shelly, at the insistence of the only other salesman who understands the art of con, recounts his moves, his thoughts, his sense of triumph in closing a most unlikely sale. These men are jackals, for whom customers are fair game, but in Shelly's tale there is a glimpse of the possibility of achievement, of professional pride. That scene recalls a more famous salesman, the much gentler Willy Loman, whose product is presumably less suspect than Shelly's, and the conflict between doing and achieving in him, between sales as a personality trade and success in its most blatant manifestations.

Willy Loman comes to mind because Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* is back on Broadway, thirty-five years after it first appeared, in a production that has come to town on an avalanche of publicity set loose by Dustin Hoffman's presence as star. It might be interesting to contemplate what Mamet's sense of the unreliability of language owes to Willy Loman's slippery verbal grasp on reality, but *Death of a Salesman* has been so often analyzed in classrooms and essays that, given the limitations of space, it is probably best to stick to this much praised production. Hoffman, as everyone who reads actor interviews knows, is a meticulous worker, concerned with the details of voice, gesture, dress as an indication of character. His Willy is carefully conceived, moving abruptly from expectant glee to sullen hurt to sudden anger, all appropriate to the character. Yet the performance disturbed me because I was too conscious at first of the actor at work, more aware of Dustin Hoffman in disguise than of Willy Loman. By the second act, as the play worked its magic on me, Hoffman and Loman merged and the performance almost became the triumph that has been so widely heralded. Kate Reid's Linda was also troubling. She could be wonderfully effective in some moments, but on occasion — the infamous "little boat looking for a harbor" telephone scene is the best example — she seemed to send her speeches, line by separate line, into the balcony like a batter knocking out flies.

The revelation in the production is John Malkovich's Biff. The vocal softness in Malkovich which could be heard through the crudeness of his Lee in *True West,* particularly in the television version, is here transformed into a vulnerability that shows us just how much Biff has lost of "the old humor, the old confidence." This reading of the character alters the nature of the antagonism between him and his father, emphasizing still further the degree of delusion in Willy who cannot see Biff even when he wears his wounds openly. The supporting parts are well played, and Ben Edwards's impressive set suggests, without copying, Jo Mielziner's marvelous original design. Despite my reservations, the production should be seen by anyone who cares about Miller, Hoffman, or the American theater.

GERALD WEALES

# Screen

## MERMAIDS & MONKEYS

### NATURE VS. CULTURE

JUST WHEN you thought it was safe to go near the water, along comes *Splash*, a movie that seemed, from its publicity at least, like the first Disney film to merit an "R" rating. Despite its ads — featuring a luscious mermaid languorously draped across a beach like a *Playboy* sea-bunny — *Splash* is not sexploitational; it came in with a "PG." Moreover, despite its Disney association (under the new label of Touchstone Films), *Splash* isn't childish either. The plot is hokey, the lines sometimes downright silly, but *Splash* is oddly moving and even a little bit instructive.

The movie gets off to a slow start before its boy-meets-fish love story surfaces. A prelude details the empty life of one Allen (Tom Hanks), who wanders aimlessly from relationship to relationship. Actor John Candy provides some spice as Allen's effervescent and irreverent older brother Alex, but his pranks wear thin after about twenty minutes. When Madison the mermaid (Daryl Hannah) finally shows up, however, *Splash* begins to surge with a rhythm that alternates successfully between sarcasm and sentiment, kvetching and lyric poetry. The tone of the movie, the second effort of television sit-com actor Ron Howard, so adroitly synthesizes comedy and romance that there is even room for something philosophical.

With a lustrous fish tail when wet and lissome legs when dry, Madison passes between nature and culture with a slightly subversive message. Although gorgeous and sensual, she is also more: a naif with no experience of civilization, its language, commerce, or mores. This allows for some slapstick at beauty's expense when, for example, she grotesquely



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munches lobster à la mer at a posh restaurant. But it also provides for *Splash*'s basic theme: the mermaid's simplicity becomes a rod to measure our culture's inadequacies and pretensions. Daryl Hannah's achievement is to make the mermaid's innocence thoroughly believable, especially when, having learned English with preternatural speed by watching TV, she repeats the catchphrases of ads with deadpan sincerity. "How long are you here?" Allen asks. "Six days," she coos without a trace of irony, "six fun-filled days." Our language of deceit is hers of transparent feeling.

Indeed, Madison's refreshing simplicity becomes the source of *Splash*'s satiric punch. One night, Allen — unaware of her origins and real nature — brings her a blue, gift-wrapped package. Madison takes it, turns it around, examines it thoughtfully, and then begins to cry; "it's so pretty," she whispers. When Allen tells her to open it, she asks with wide-eyed astonishment, "You mean there's something more?" At the sea level of her innocence, Madison interprets everything so straightforwardly that we begin to see how spoiled we are, and how pure of heart it is to take things at face value. When the truth about her identity comes out, Allen must make a parallel decision about her, a choice he almost blows.

Here *Splash*'s satire fails, however: it's just too easy for Allen to accept Madison, the package is too gorgeous, tails or not. He faces no painful decision between beautitude and beatitude, and no real sacrifice. Moreover, the final abandonment of civilization at the end of the film is too facile and needed better preparation. When Madison's secret is revealed, she is arrested, experimented on, almost dissected, and even pursued by the fish-stick queen Mrs. Paul. Abandoning *this* is understandable; but culture as a whole is often celebrated in *Splash*, especially on visits to Bloomingdale's and other upscale locations. *Splash* skirts the edge of social criticism, then backs away. Spielberg managed to be both light and deep with *E.T.*; Ron Howard almost, but not quite, manages the same with *Splash*.

The comparison is fair. Madison may not look like E.T. (or that less genial avatar of the trapped beast, King Kong), but *Splash*'s plot reveals her family resemblance. The mermaid is the alien lover whose caresses are misunderstood as she nearly sacrifices all for her human beloved. Civilization cannot tolerate her alien simplicity: like Kong shot down by airplane, or E.T. racked onto respirators, machines almost get Madison. Fortunately she is an aqua-terrestrial; discontent with civilization, she can find a brave new home where the scientists can't reach her. Like *E.T.*, *Splash* tickles the fancy and touches the heart. It barely misses Spielberg's magic.

*GREYSTOKE* is a more serious film, with publicity that stresses "no yodeling." The director, Hugh Hudson, formerly of *Chariots of Fire*, has here attempted to de-camp the Tarzan legend from the likes of Johnny Weismuller and Bo Derek and return to the source material of Edgar Rice Burroughs. In the original tale, John Layton, a human infant, is orphaned in the jungle, raised by ape parents, and lured back to civilization and the ancestral estate of his family, Greystoke, there to face an uncertain future.

At first glance, *Greystoke* is much superior to *Splash*. Except for the underwater sequences, *Splash* looks undistinguished and sometimes seems like a home movie; *Greystoke*, by contrast, is visually superb. Its first half details jungle life in vivid and sometimes shockingly violent vignettes: Layton doesn't live with "Cheetah" but a band of apes savagely bedeviled by leopards, snakes, pygmies, and their own power struggles. The second half of the movie involves lush views of late nineteen-century aristocratic England, particularly the family estate in the Scottish lowlands. Here, as in *Chariots of Fire*, Hudson satirizes British pomp, personified in dry-as-dust scientists and spoiled dandies whom Jane (Andie MacDowell) rejects in favor of the wild man (Christopher Lambert). The best scene in the movie occurs with expert mimicry of upper-class accents followed by more guttural lion murmurs that inflame Jane's ardor.

But Jane isn't Layton's only emotional tie, and therein lies *Greystoke*'s problem. He just has too many possible relationships, none of which provide a dramatic center. After losing his natural parents and then his ape foster parents, Tarzan is rescued from the jungle by a Belgian scientist named D'Arnot (Ian Holm), and then returned to Greystoke and his grandfather (Sir Ralph Richardson in his last film role). Each performance in this sequence is fine, but the power of the acting is undercut by the "and-then" screenplay which produces an awkward, fragmented effect. Certainly this makes clear Tarzan's predicament: he is a man without a species, without a proper niche on the great chain of being. But it also illustrates the film's predicament: there is little sense of unity as Tarzan confronts his dilemma; there is no one-on-one relationship, not even with Jane, that fully objectifies the split that he feels between nature and culture.

*Greystoke* was a difficult movie to make, an effort worth seeing. Perhaps its problems ultimately derive from its strange, hybrid nature: it is both an adventure movie, with all the associations that jungles, vines, boa constrictors, and leopards call up, and a tragedy, in which Tarzan cannot possibly choose the right course. An adventure-tragedy is a curious blend, and perhaps simply defies an audience's expectations, or ingrained prejudices. To its credit, *Greystoke* is trying to be a different kind of movie. To an extent, it succeeds, and provides another version of civilization and its discontents. Ironically, despite an initial awkwardness and vaudeville humor, *Splash* treats the same theme better.

TOM O'BRIEN

*(Tom O'Brien, one of the guest critics reviewing movies for* Commonweal, *teaches at the Manhattan School of Music.)*

David Leedy

## Thinking of Sappho

Thou, Hesper, draw me home whom dawn cast wide:
A child to my bed, a man to my woman's side.



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# Books: ANTI-IMPERIALISM & ASCETICISM

**TOLSTOY AND GANDHI, MEN OF PEACE**
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**Martin Green**
**Basic Books, $23.50, 315 pp.**

**AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY**
THE STORY OF MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH
**Mohandas K. Gandhi**
**Beacon Press, $8.95 paper, 528 pp.**

**THE GANDHI NOBODY KNOWS**
**Richard Grenier**
**Thomas Nelson, $3.95 Paper, 120 pp.**

**GANDHI, A PICTORIAL BIOGRAPHY**
**Gerald Gold. Afterword by Richard Attenborough**
**Newmarket Press, $9.95 paper, 192 pp.**

**Patrick Jordan**

ACCORDING to Raghavan Iyer (*The Moral and Political Thought of Mahatma Gandhi*), more books and essays have been written about Gandhi than any figure in history, excepting the founders of the great religions. Nor was Gandhi's own writing hand still. His literary works consist of eighty volumes and better than ten million words.

Gandhi's autobiography or "experiments with truth," has been reissued to capitalize on recent interest. Written twenty eventful years *before* his death, this is essential Gandhi. It is replete with his remarkable candor, imagination, openness, and resolve. Martin Green has praised Gandhi's literary style for its "range of tones, of humor, reasonableness, solemnity, and tenderness, all coaxed out of a surprisingly limited instrument." The work hums with an inner motivation and consistency; its experiments come off as real works-in-progress recounted. Before there was a term for nonviolence, for example, Gandhi was forced to run a contest in his paper *Indian Opinion* to invent one. The winner was *satyagraha* or "firmness in truth," "nonviolence."

Gandhi views himself in these pages with science-like detachment and self-humor, with a readiness to acknowledge incompleteness. "I did not prove an ideal father," he writes. When he objects, on religious grounds, to medical treatment being given Kasturba, his wife, who is hemorrhaging, she agrees to forego the treatment and settles for Gandhi's naturopathic nostrums. Kasturba recovered. But Gandhi can write: "She recovered quickly, hemorrhage completely stopped, and I added somewhat to my reputation as a quack." There are other life-threatening episodes, and one is reminded of Bernanos's statement that "I believe only where I pay dearly." Gandhi paid dearly, and in full. His autobiography merits the term classic.

Not only do we now have a monumental corpus of writing by and about Gandhi, we have a major film and the criticism it has engendered. Richard Grenier's *The Gandhi Nobody Knows* first appeared in *Commentary* as a review of the Attenborough movie. Grenier's opinions of Gandhi are neither revelatory nor clarifying—Gandhi mentions them all himself. Rather his purpose is to make a bilious attack on Attenborough. Gandhi is "more complex. . . more interesting than the character on the screen." The movie is "a fraud of the most egregious kind," "straight pacifist disinformation." Whatever merit there might be to Grenier's view, he never allows the reader the moral distance necessary to judge. His blows are falling too fast.

Attenborough has had his day at the publisher's as well. Newmarket Press issued three "tie-in" books with his film *Gandhi*. Here Attenborough writes the afterword for Gerald Gold's pictorial biography. Gold's rendering is strictly elementary. The photographs do provoke interest. Attenborough compares photographs of the real Gandhi with still shots from the film. There is a note of "How well are we doing?" What is evident is that despite Ben Kingsley's gifted portrayal in the film, he is clearly not the real Gandhi. A more satisfying pictorial biography, and perhaps the best introduction to Gandhi to boot, is Eknath Easwaran's *Gandhi the Man*.

The most recent significant contribution to Gandhian studies is the writings of Martin Green. Green calls his *Tolstoy and Gandhi* a "biography." He so entwines their lives and thought that he needs but the singular. Green is fully aware of their odd glamour, their overawing features and moral fissures.

*Tolstoy and Gandhi* is the final installment of a trilogy entitled *The Lust for Power*. The first volume, *The Challenge of the Mahatmas* (1978) was inspired in part by Green's visit to India in 1975. It should be noted, Green's works all have an autobiographical reference. His early study on Yeats and von Hügel noted that von Hügel's reconciliation of humanism and Catholicism was responsible for Green's own conversion. But Green's apostrophes are strictly intended, directed solely to situate. They never dally, but rather add concreteness to the vital issues with which Green intends to wrestle.

In Green's trilogy the issue is: "I am concerned with the lust for power built into our imagination. . . into our radicalism as well as our conservatism." By thus stating the question, Green addresses each of his readers. As the vehicle for examining power, he chooses Tolstoy and Gandhi because, he says, they were both *hugely* powerful, in psyche as well as in objective accomplishment. They deserve scrutiny precisely because they performed the paradox of turning power "against itself, against all the truly sinister manifestations of that lust."

Most readers, of course, will already know there exists a significant relation between Tolstoy (1828-1910) and Gandhi (1869-1948). Green makes no claim to novelty on this account. Both read



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each other's works, and briefly corresponded. One of the last entries in Tolstoy's diary was in praise of Gandhi. Gandhi looked on himself as Tolstoy's spiritual son. His early hesitancies about nonviolence had been overcome by reading Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*. Gandhi quoted Tolstoy's parables and metaphors so freely he was unconscious of borrowing them. He named his communal farm in South Africa Tolstoy Farm, and said that days there were the deepest days of faith in his life.

Green is a master of design. As a literary critic, he has a genius for picking subject matter, and a special nose for whatever framework supports a literary work. He utilizes similar skills in his own writing. In *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire* (1979) the second volume of the trilogy, he makes a telling comparison of Tolstoy and James Fenimore Cooper. He begins with their similarities, for, he says, contrasts only make sense within a context of similarity. He employs this mechanism on a broader scale with Gandhi and Tolstoy. And he brings to bear a knowledge of the Russian language and Indian and Russian literature as well as his own extensive literary background.

Green is also a highly skilled writer. He approaches his material with precision. He knows the dimensions of subtlety, can be swift and surgical, aquiline, and brilliant. He seems to be that rarest of contemporaries: one who not only calls attention to but understands paradox. "Gandhi's nature," he writes, "was full of aggression. He directed that force primarily against his own appetites, against his body, and to some degree against aggression itself. But it was always to be felt in him, and as a quite unashamed presence."

Green's study is of imperialist cultures. Again *we* are addressed. Gandhi and Tolstoy are the greatest anti-imperialists not because of their intellectual magnitude but because they attack the very logic of such power. Their mode of dealing with reality is essentially kenotic, premised on self-emptying. Their ethics *and* their politics are rooted in sacrifice. And thus, Green says, they are "essentially anti-humanist," a startling puzzlement for his readers for whom the principle of expansion and exfoliation are normative.

Green seems to agree with Gandhi and Tolstoy that "the only root of effective anti-imperialism is ascetism." Gandhi's vow (1906) of *brahmacharya*, renunciation of sexual activity and even sexual desire, is akin to Tolstoy's teaching on sexuality in *The Kreutzer Sonata*. Green notes that in 1920 when Gandhi was acquiring national leadership, he became erotically drawn to Saraladevi Chaudhrani, the wife of a nationalist leader. She was beautiful, a woman of broad cultural education. Gandhi admits he nearly slipped. "I was saved. . . but I don't know how." Green writes that as Gandhi found himself an embodiment of power, "eroticism and a general expansion of the self was an inevitable temptation." Gandhi as well as Tolstoy eventually forsook all positions of power.

Concomitantly, Gandhi and Tolstoy questioned the revolutionists and deplored industrialism as inherently exploitative. Gandhi promoted detailed schemes of self-help. Nehru, abandoning him, took India down the route of modern development. Nehru's difficulties typify our own. He responded to much in Gandhi but was unwilling to respond to more. Tolstoy and Gandhi admired the revolutionaries of their time but stood in steadfast opposition to their goals and means. Thus, writes Green, "The Russian revolutionaries looked to Tolstoy as their major opponent on the left."

Gandhi's religious politics were as radical and unintelligible to most as Tolstoy's. Green tells of Gandhi's reaction to a crucifix he viewed in the Vatican in 1931 while returning from the Round Table Conference in London. "I saw there at once that nations, like individuals, could only be made through the agony of the Cross, and in no other way." Both viewed political societies *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Such men will inspire antipathy. A person is known by the number and qualities of his enemies. So Green analyzes the enemies. In the end, Tolstoy fled a domestic hell, hated by his own family. Gandhi's influence was muted, India partitioned into separate Hindu and Muslim states wracked with religious civil war. Lord Mountbatten said that Gandhi's allies stalked Gandhi. "I had the most curious feeling they were. . . against Gandhi. They encouraged me to challenge him." Gandhi himself noted he was "a back number." Tolstoy called himself a *yurodivi*, one of God's fools.

Yet when Gandhi went to Bengal in 1947 to attempt reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims, one of his last great acts, he pointedly said, "I have come not to give consolation but to bring courage." He was ever realistic, ever erect to the demands of the hour. Iyer, the political scientist, has written of Gandhi, but it could be said of Tolstoy as well, "While the best may often be the enemy of the good, an appeal to the best may be the only way, in certain circumstances, of arresting a rapid moral decline or even securing some good."

Martin Green's trilogy is a marvelous concurrence. Not only do Gandhi and Tolstoy keep our minds alight, as Green writes, "even if or as we go down to disaster," but in his own way Green performs a similar service. We can hope that as his writings seek to clarify his own struggles, they will continue to help us bear our own.

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# The rural terror

**ONE DAY OF LIFE**

**Manlio Argueta**

**Vintage Books, $6.95, 215 pp.**

**Marc Edelman**

THERE are exiled Salvadorans who say that Manlio Argueta was not tortured during the many times he was in prison in El Salvador. Argueta so managed to entrance his captors, it is said, that they banged leather straps against the wall and told him to scream at the top of his lungs, so the higher-ups who gave the orders to torture would hear and think the guards were doing their duty.

If it is unusual to find a novelist from Argueta's peasant background, it is still more unusual to find such a clear and lyrical description of what is called in Latin America *la toma de consciencia*, the process through which people oppressed for centuries develop an awareness that their condition is not the result of fate, but rather of an unjust social system imposed on them from above. In this respect, the experiences of the family described in *One Day of Life* mirror those of Argueta and of thousands of other Salvadorans.

Set in a small village in the northern province of Chalatenango in the period just before the outbreak of El Salvador's civil war, *One Day of Life* is a collective biography about a rural family narrated in stream-of-consciousness form by a forty-five-year-old grandmother, Lupe Fuentes, as well as by her daughter, granddaughter, and "the authorities" who are often conscripted peasants themselves. Lupe awakens at five in the morning and begins the day concerned with mundane things like feeding the children and watering the garden.

Only gradually do we realize that she has already lost her son, a farmworker organizer, to a local death squad and a son-in-law to National Guard kidnappers. Her husband José, or "Chepe," helped establish a cooperative and, like most men in the region, now sleeps in the mountains because there have been threats against him. But in spite of these travails, Lupe's outlook is hardly political. As we watch her in the course of this one day, we hear her talking about life's hardships, but also about God, the beauty of the birds and the clouds, the spirits of the forest and her pet dog. Only little by little does she tell us of her recent discovery "that something called rights existed" and that "we must learn so many things, so as not to live with our eyes shut." But even here, she admits that she knows little of such things and that Chepe and her granddaughter Adolfina are the ones who really seem to understand the baffling and arbitrary behavior of those in power.

It was the young priests that Lupe credits for first opening the eyes of people in Chalatenango, priests who wore work pants and visited with people in their huts and who formed cooperatives so peasants


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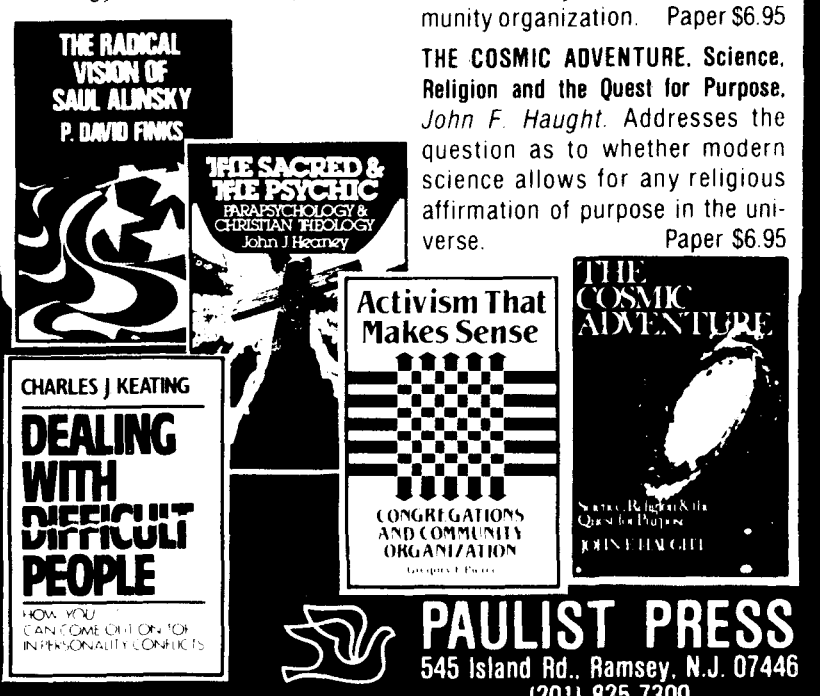


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would get a just price for their eggs, chickens, or pigs. When the National Guard tries to intimidate people to keep them from going to Mass and then brutalizes and drives into exile one young priest, more and more people begin to listen to local Christian Farmworkers Federation organizers who urge them to unite to struggle for their survival and their rights.

Lupe's day begins like any other, but by 9:30 in the morning the dreaded National Guard comes to her house, looking for Adolfina. By early afternoon, the guards have visited yet another tragedy on Lupe's family and she steels herself to carry on and to deny them the satisfaction of seeing her pain.

*One Day of Life* is only thinly-disguised history. The brutalization of the young priest in Argueta's novel is very much like the 1977 assassination of Father Rutilio Grande, whose death catalyzed opposition to the government among the peasants of his poor Chalatenango parish. Similarly, the search and destroy operation which Adolfina protests by participating in the occupation of the San Salvador cathedral is clearly modeled on one which the military ironically dubbed "Operation Rutilio." This campaign was one of the first steps in converting Chalatenango into what it is today, a bastion of the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), the largest and most radical of the guerrilla organizations. Supporting the FPL in Chalatenango are the real-life members of the Christian Farmworkers Federation, not unlike Argueta's Chepe and Adolfina.

*One Day of Life* was first published in 1980 by the Jesuit-run Central American University in San Salvador. The military reacted by banning the book, seizing the existing copies and forcing Argueta into exile in Costa Rica. It has since been translated into a dozen languages and published throughout Europe and Latin America. The Vintage-Random House edition inaugurates the Aventura Library of Contemporary World Literature. Bill Brow's translation captures well the Salvadoran peasant's vernacular and Argueta's austere prose.

Few novels provide so authentic a picture of the world of the rural poor in Latin America. Gabriel García Márquez's works capture many of the absurdities inherent in societies long dominated by military dictators and oligarchs, but their often surrealistic tone reflects the vision of a cosmopolite, not of the rural dweller. Perhaps only Graciliano Ramos's *Barren Lives* on the Brazilian northeast and Paulo Carvalho-Neto's as yet untranslated *Mi Tio Atahualpa* on the Ecuadorian Andes are as genuinely moving as Manlio Argueta's novel on the peasants of Chalatenango. *One Day of Life* would be a special book even if El Salvador were not the scene of a growing civil war.

# A gentleman's history

**THE PERCYS OF MISSISSIPPI**
POLITICS AND LITERATURE IN THE NEW SOUTH
**Lewis Baker**
**Louisiana State University, $20, 237 pp.**

**Sidney Callahan**

IF YOU are obsessed with the South, Walker Percy, Faulkner's world, or family histories, you will read this account with fascination. For those not similarly entranced, this historical work may, I fear, appear dull or frustrating in its uneven treatment of topics and superficial psychological analysis.

This version of the Percy story begins with the romantic tale of the founding of the Percy family in the pre-Civil War South. In the first chapter the focus is upon the military and postwar adventures of Col. William Alexander Percy, whose silver hair, piercing eyes, and qualities of leadership earned him the name, "the Gray Eagle of the Delta." The dramatic beginnings of the Percy family might come straight from the pages of Faulkner's fiction. The final chapter of this history analyzes the contemporary novels of Walker Percy, the Gray Eagle's great-grandson.

The main body of the book is devoted to the concerns and careers of Col. Percy's son, LeRoy, and LeRoy's son, Will. LeRoy Percy married Camille, a French Catholic belle of the Delta, and gallantly carried on his father's profession of law, planting, and political leadership. LeRoy served for a term in the U.S. Senate, but preferred exercising power behind the scenes, working all his life for the good of his region. LeRoy and Camille's only surviving son, Will Percy, eventually practiced law with his father, but he was also dedicated to art, literature, and his own writing. While the father went hunting for rest and relaxation, once even hosting a hunt for Teddy Roosevelt, Will Percy went to the opera and New York's Greenwich Village.

At home in the Delta, LeRoy and Will exercised their influence as eloquent advocates of progress, reason, and moderation. Shaped by their traditions of wealth, travel, and cultivated intelligence, the Percys possessed sophisticated enlightened views which inevitably embroiled them, generation after generation, in struggles against bigotry. From the conflicts surrounding Reconstruction, to the dramatic fight against the Ku Klux Klan, the Percys courageously stood on principle and battled for the right as they saw it.

Happily, most of the time doing the good thing and doing well were not in conflict; thus the Percys could maintain their honor along with their wealth and social position. In championing the rights of the Delta Negroes, for instance, they also helped keep their labor force from fleeing north. Above all, the three-generation Percy effort to obtain flood control for the Delta combined personal and community interest. When the last great flood of 1927 came, wreaking havoc, LeRoy and Will's leadership and exhausting rescue operation provides an example of aristocracy in action, an elite justifying its privilege.

But at what price does an elite maintain a tradition of "noblesse oblige"? Wealth buttresses a family against material disasters and provides access to the benefits of education and leisured culture. Indeed, Lewis Baker takes as the theme of his history the Percys' continuing ability to lead "the good life." Yet wealth and high social position may also



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close off experience and bring peculiar pressures. The first Percy in the new world committed suicide, and over the generations there appear tragic accidents, private and professional renunciations, nervous disorder and suicide. None of these are analyzed in any depth in Lewis Baker's bland reading of events and character.

Consider the enigma of Will Percy: lawyer, planter, poet. Will adopted and raised Walker Percy and his brothers after their father's suicide and their mother's death in an automobile accident. As a young man Will had gone to Sewanee, Harvard Law School, served in the First World War, and after a time writing poetry in the North, come home to live. Will was widely traveled, moderately productive as a poet, and the author of the popular memoir, *Lanterns on the Levee*. He never married and yet maintained an elaborate household for his adopted sons and a constant stream of artistic and intellectual company. He played the role of paternal planter aristocrat, as well as that of poet and encourager of regional artists. Will fought for the rights of local blacks and dispensed charity generously, but he thought of most Negroes as happy primitives incapable of coping without white guidance.

While still in college, Will left his ardent Catholicism inherited from Camille, his idealized mother. Throughout his life he appears as a person steeped in deep nostalgia for lost loveliness, or as Faulkner once described him, a man estranged from his times. Will was an avowed follower of the detached stoicism of Marcus Aurelius; his renunciation ofsmarriage is explained by Baker as an idealist's inability to combine romantic feeling with sexual desire.

But this picture of genteel detachment is upset by a short passing paragraph referring to the death of a lifelong male friend who cried out for Will in his final illness. Will moved into his friend's house in order to nurse him and then buried his friend in the Percy plot. The author makes no further comment on this, or on Will's friendship with another man with whom Will owned a summer house at Sewanee. Will's inner emotional life remains opaque to the reader, and one wonders whether some reticence is at work here, or whether this is just another example of the author's obtuseness.

Sexuality is definitely absent from this history, as is any acute analysis of the Percy women. They are all presented as lovely, spirited, and full of charm — period. Few family conflicts or family dynamics of any kind are explored; besides the mystery of Will, a host of other intriguing questions are left hanging. Why the suicides, and how were they and the tragic accidents coped with? What of the beautiful Camille's life? How was the deep conflict between Will and LeRoy resolved when they disagreed over how to rescue the blacks stranded in the last great flood?

Religious experience is also scanted. Camille Percy was a Catholic, LeRoy wasn't, Will lapsed, and Walker converted, but there isn't much more said than that. Why and at what cost did these allegiances stand, invert, or fall? The final chapter's analysis of the existential themes and characters of Walker Percy's novels is no substitute for the historian's task of understanding the reality of the individual family members' actual existence.

While quotes from Walker Percy's books are used to introduce each chapter, the reader gets the distinct impression that he never talked to the author and cooperated not at all in this history of his family. Why not? Was the project too intrusive of family privacy, or was he all too sure that literary criticism and family history cannot be done at the same time without poor results in each genre. For all the effort and conscientious work expended by Baker, more is missing than Walker Percy's authentic voice or insight into Will Percy's complex personality.

Well — perhaps in the best tradition of southern gentility, I can recast my criticisms in a positive way. Let us say that Lewis Baker, either by birth or devoted study has become imbued with the Percy family ethos. Such a family, as Will at least made explicit in his writing, would abhor and deplore the modern tendency to pry, psychoanalyze, and publicize private lives. Therefore Baker concentrates on the public battles with the Ku Klux Klan and the struggles for flood control. (Only a book about the Percys could keep me plowing through so many paragraphs devoted to levee construction.)

Also, any published work of family members can be considered public property, so extended treatments of these are acceptable. But the complex rules of gentlemanly behavior do not sanction delving into sexual habits, family conflicts, the character of women, religious struggles, or unfortunate family tragedies. What remains is a gentleman's history of political and literary gentlemen — which whets our appetite to know more.

## REVIEWERS

PATRICK JORDAN *was formerly one of the editors of* The Catholic Worker *in New York.*

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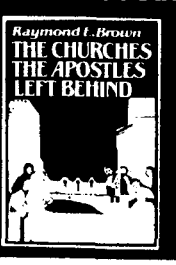


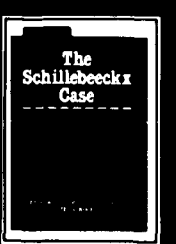


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# Metaphors & monotheism

**THE CANNIBAL GALAXY**

**Cynthia Ozick**
**Knopf, $11.95, 162 pp.**

**Margaret Wimsatt**

CYNTHIA OZICK is a respected writer of short fiction, and has recently collected her essays in a book called *Art and Ardor* (also published by Knopf). This is her second novel, and the first, *Trust*, appeared in 1966. *Trust*, though full of miniature flashes of observation and intelligence, was over-long and heavy with the undigested philosophic ramblings of its protagonists. *The Cannibal Galaxy*, though not simple, hangs together tightly. (No doubt the discipline of short-story writing accounts for the difference.) This novel too has its difficulties. It is not easy to embody philosophical generalizations in fictional characters. The main character, Joseph Brill, teacher, is perhaps a prototype of the Wandering Jew carrying his sorrows, if not forever, at least through a too-long life. His complementary opposite, Hester Lilt, a semanticist, has fewer immortal longings and achieves, perhaps, more fulfillment.

When the novel opens, Joseph is principal of the Edmond Fleg Primary School, located in the American midwest, which boasts of its Dual Curriculum, Rabbinic and academic. ". . . Principal Brill. Everyone said it just that way . . . (he) scared and awed . . . But he kept by him the bitter homonym, the notion of Principle embodied in a Principal, his own comfortless comical theory — ha! — of flawed incarnation." The children are unfailingly middle-class and mediocre, their mothers are Jewish mothers, and the world of school flows on like a river; there will always be a third grade, and an eighth, "wave after wave, but always the same wave."

Joseph has grown middle-aged in the midst of universal middleness, far from the aspirations of his youth in the Paris ghetto, where Rabbi Pult instructed the boys every afternoon in the back room of the family *poissonerie*, and where Joseph studied at the Sorbonne — secular subjects and in particular, astronomy — until the shadow of Nazi power caused his professor to dismiss him. Joseph, though most of his family disappeared eastward into the terror, survived, survived at first in the cellar of a Paris convent school, later in the loft of a barn in rural France. In the cellar, by dim light, he read and read. There he discovered the works of Edmond Fleg, a Jewish agnostic who through the study of Christianity returned to his own faith. "So it came to Joseph Brill, imprisoned in a school, that he would found a school . . . He saw the civilization that invented the telescope side by side with the civilization that invented conscience — astronomers and God-praisers uniting in a majestic dream of peace."

We learn much less about Hester Lilt, who is seen through Joseph's eyes. From a television program, he learns that she is an imagistic linguistic logician, and that her most celebrated book is called *The World as Appearance*. Thinking to enhance the reputation of his school, he enrolls her unpromising daughter Beulah. For eight years Hester intrigues and baffles him; she reminds him of the world of learning, of European Jewry, that he has left behind him; unlike the other mothers, she is aloof; she will not address the school parents; her daughter remains a poor student, with stony eyes. She tells him that he has deserted his aspirations, and later, that she herself aspires only to be a good mother to her child. She is a maker of metaphors, lecturing on the cannibal galaxies which Brill understands better than she. "For him the cosmos was always inhuman, of a terrible coldness, and far away, even though one lived in its midst. For her it was a long finger tapping."

After eight years (grades) Hester and Beulah move to Paris. Brill marries a pretty secretary much younger than he, begets a son, is forced out of his post by his school board, and ends in sad retirement in Florida. But his last years are teased by the emergence of Beulah as a famous artist who has replaced her mother on highbrow television shows. He dislikes the themes of her pictures, and can see only the paint.

Cynthia Ozick writes learnedly. An occasional onomatopoeia, will strike the ear or eye. "It was all there always, nature's prank of duplication: in the skin, in the shin, in the position of an ear in relation to a hairline, in the arc of a lip; and even more than that, in a jeer, in a word, in a lie . . ." The Great Lakes are "in the breast pocket of the continent." The Fleg School buildings, of various dates, resemble in profile the box cars of the Holocaust. "*The world rests on the breath of the children in the schoolhouses* — this fragment of Talmud feathered his spirit like a frond from a tree in deep warmth." But her real interest is in problems, in philosophy, in morality, in monotheism. This novel is about words vs. art, a problem which troubled poor Joseph all his life. In his childhood, he had confused a statue of Rachel, the eighteenth-century French actress, with the Rachel of the Old Testament weeping for her children. Later, in the Louvre, he watches children admiring *Greek* and *Roman* statues, *Attic* vases. Finally he must confront Beulah Lilt and the plastic quality of her paint — Beulah, who had nearly failed his Dual Curriculum. The teacher, named for a Biblical hero, was by then too old and maudlin to remember Rabbi Pult's teaching: that these arts were forbidden by Jahweh to his people; they were left to the Canaanites and the Greeks. For monotheists the path to wisdom is marked only by Midrash and commentary.

# Correspondence

*(Continued from page 258)*

icy of this state with whatever pro-life crumbs were left from the Supreme Court table. For this effort, pro-lifers here, as everywhere, have been subjected to derision, social ostracism, disdain, and of course media suspicion and hostility. I know these people as well as I know my own family members, and I can assure the readers of *Commonweal* that I count



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myself privileged to be among their ranks. They are people of faith. They are totally non-materialistic, which in this society is phenomenal . . . .

I have seen pro-life people pick themselves up after incredible and humiliating defeats, and start over. The irony is that they are harder on themselves than Senator Carlin and his ilk could ever be, inasmuch as we always feel inadequate to the challenge to Christians and Americans which this battle demands.

I am saddened by Senator Carlin's cheap shots at Phyllis Schlafly. I have had the privilege of being in her company on innumerable occasions. Her poise, her good manners, her keen intelligence, have commanded the respect of thousands of women across the nation like me, who were truly desperate for good leadership.

Perhaps that is what is frightening to Senator Carlin. For his article on abortion suggests a certain confusion, e.g., "I'm not convinced that personhood begins at the moment of conception" and "abortions in certain cases could be justifiable early in the pregnancy, given sufficiently grave reasons, and the later the date in the pregnancy the more grave the reason would have to be." No pro-lifer would make a statement liek that. At the risk of being labeled a "fanatic" by the senator, the objective fact is that abortion is an act of violence against the innocent no matter what "grave reason" is put forward . . . .

The pity is that we might work together, Senator Carlin and I, if he can work his way through his present confusion, and set aside his prejudices against the "fevered" anti-abortion people. For he really has nowhere else to go but to us, without doing violence to his own conscience.

As for me, I will gamble on the pro-life people. My husband used to tell me over and over: "You must influence the leadership." One day I turned to him and responded: "No. We must become the leadership."

HILDA C. NICOLOSI

*Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.*

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# Are "schoolboy scuffles" in the White House damaging Reagan's chances to achieve world peace?

**"My frankness may startle."**

When Alexander M. Haig, Jr., became U.S. Secretary of State, he saw in President Reagan "a figure who possessed great gifts of leadership—an honest mind, a good heart, a sound conception of America, and the common touch."

Today, "it remains my hope as an American that history will have reason to call Reagan great."

But "staff mischief," Haig believes, may prevent it.

And so, saddened and alarmed, he has written his *Caveat*.

"My frankness may startle," Haig predicts.

It will.

For he speaks bluntly about the "schoolboy scuffles for personal advantage" among Reagan aides. They have produced, he declares, "an atmosphere of uncertainty and mistrust"—and, in foreign affairs, "flawed results" as the pillars of the policy Haig tried to establish were "shaken by the Samsons of populism and petty ambition."

Haig's account of his stormy tenure as Secretary of State is salted with wit and graced with thoughtful insights, as he discusses the AWACS controversy...China...Poland...the Falklands crisis...and the "mixed signals" that bedeviled our Lebanon experience.

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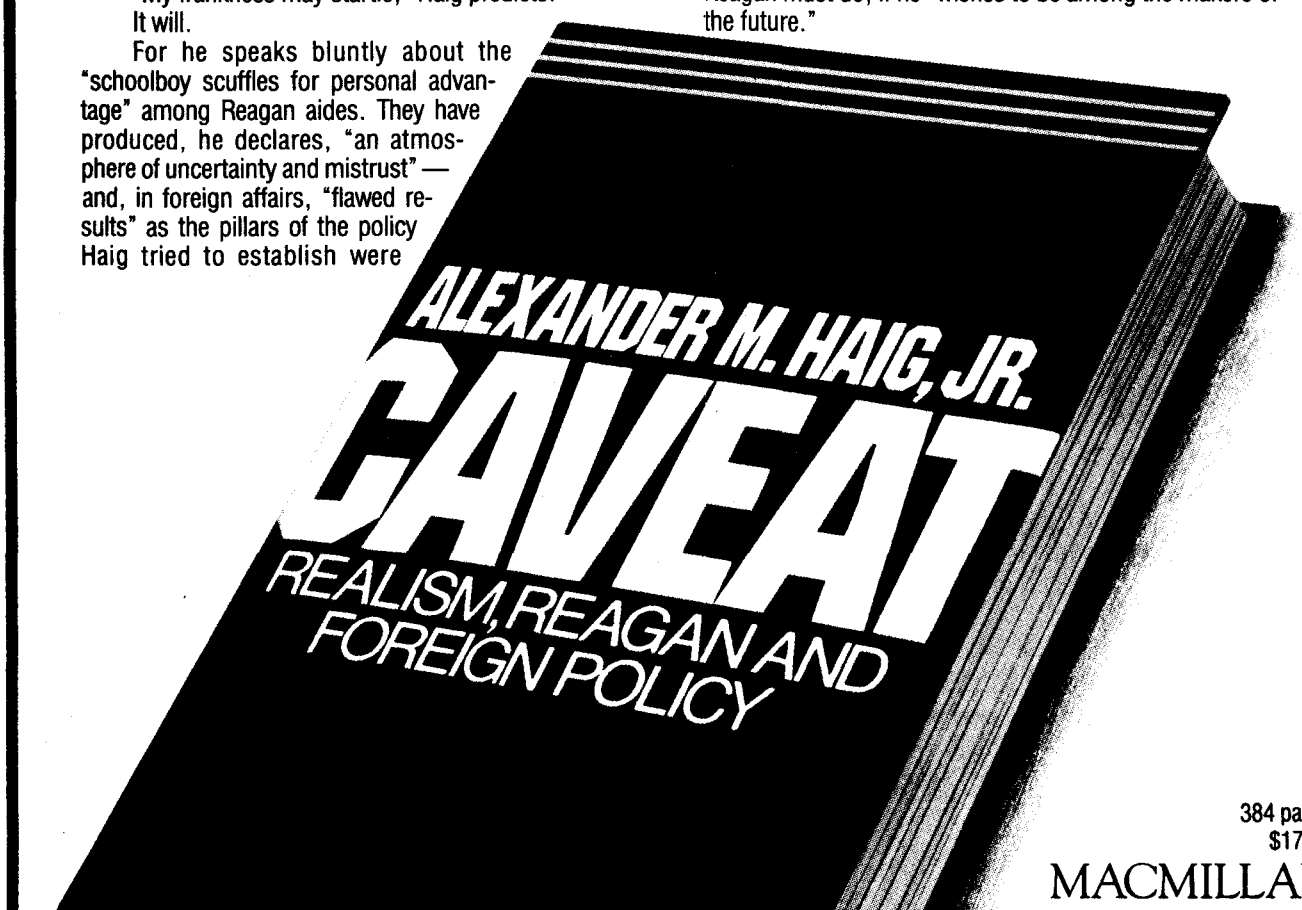
Alexander Haig's *Caveat* is more than a warning. It is a bold statement of purpose—one man's view of the direction America's foreign policy must take, and what Ronald Reagan must do, if he "wishes to be among the makers of the future."

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